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**THE IDENTITY OF COSMOPOLITAN WOMEN
– THE BEAUTY MYTH IN HOROSCOPICAL DISCOURSE**

Dissertation submitted by
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Under the supervision of
dr hab. prof. AJD Piotr Mamet

Katowice 2016

Uniwersytet Śląski
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**TOŻSAMOŚĆ KOSMOPOLITYCZNYCH KOBIET
– MIT PIĘKNA W DYSKURSIE HOROSKOPOWYM**

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Praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem
dr. hab. prof. AJD Piotra Mameta

Katowice 2016

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Introduction

It is not a lie – even the most intricate, deliberate, dishonest and premeditated – that may cause the greatest threat to the truth, but a myth which is persistent, persuasive and taken for granted even though unrealistic.

In the contemporary patriarchal culture of consumerism, myths understood as false convictions shared and lived by people, prove extremely effective in managing social practices, establishing and maintaining social and political orders intact. One of the social fictions that has taken over the helm in this culture is the beauty myth. It has to be stressed that even though the name *beauty myth* may evoke an immediate association with appearance, essentially it is prescribing particular behaviour – behaviour which is beneficial for economic and political reasons. Within the beauty myth, such behaviour arises to the status of a social virtue. Values are ascribed new meanings. Concepts seem to become merely conceptualisations. False convictions are constructed within the discursive realm of the beauty myth which enters language to be transmitted. Indeed, though the beauty myth takes different forms, it is mainly through language and through discourse that it continues persistently to function.

The phenomenon of the beauty myth (though not necessarily under this name) and its related issues – the social construction of female body and female identity, have acquired much attention from researchers representing various scientific perspectives, sociological, psychological, cultural or historical. The topics have been extensively discussed in the context of gender studies and feminist considerations. Selected views are quoted in the thesis, though a true inspiration for the present study was the book by Naomi Wolf (1991) entitled *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*, in which the author exposes the destructive mechanism and an oppressive function of the myth, and uncovers the reasons and intentions behind its persistent existence by confronting the beauty industry in contemporary culture and its advertising. Wolf's study of the beauty myth and the author of the present dissertation's professional activity as a linguist, mostly interested in and working on pragmatics, discourse analysis, gender and a socio-linguistic picture of the world (among

other areas) have inevitably resulted in combining the two, which is intended to respond to a niche in linguistic studies of the beauty myth.

The primary aim of the dissertation is to investigate the discourse of the beauty myth from a socio-linguistic perspective, which study is a response to the niche in the linguistic research on the phenomenon. The analysis involves identifying the beauty myth's linguistic manifestations, as exemplified by one thousand daily *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes retrieved from the online version of the magazine, and revealing a socio-linguistic image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman and its relation to identity construction. In accordance with Critical Discourse Analysis assumptions, it also approaches the problem matter critically and attempts to indicate the threats the discourse of the beauty myth poses.

The title of the dissertation summarises the essential fields of interest in the present research. The foundation for the investigation includes the theory of the beauty myth and discourse. The discourse is horoscopolical (or horoscopic¹) since horoscopes constitute the corpus for analysis. The horoscopes come from the British edition of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website. Since the magazine is targeted at women, it is the issue of female identity that the author wishes to discuss in relation to the discourse of the beauty myth.

All the premises mentioned above constitute the foundation for the paper which fundamentally consists of five parts: an introduction, a theoretical part which focuses on a review of approaches and literature, a research design part which explains the author's methodological choices and research procedures used, a research part which constitutes a socio-linguistic investigation of the problem matter, and a summary-conclusions-and-critical-remarks part which closes the considerations. These parts are further subdivided into chapters as follows.

Chapter 1 concerns the concept of discourse, discourse analysis and horoscope as a specific genre and discourse representation. It also discusses key aspects of discourse and discourse analysis as a research method, discourse as a chief factor in social constructions and Critical Discourse Analysis. The considerations end with an examination of communicative, semantic, pragmatic, cognitive and axiological dimensions of discourse.

¹ The adjectives *horoscopic* and *horoscopolical* may be used interchangeably to mean 'of or relating to horoscopes, resembling horoscopes, having some characteristics or the nature of horoscopes, or having to do with horoscopes.' The online version of the Oxford dictionary [WWW₁₄] presents both forms as derivatives of the word *horoscope*. This seems to be confirmed by yet another online dictionary [WWW₃₆], according to which the suffix *-ical* is a combination of *-ic* and *-al*, and is used to form adjectives from nouns, to provide synonyms to words which end in *-ic*, or to provide an adjective with additional meanings to those with the *-ic* suffix. The possibility of using both adjectives has also been consulted with a native speaker of English. It has been decided, however, that the form *horoscopolical* will be used throughout the thesis, to stay consistent with the title.

Chapter 2 explores the phenomenon of myth – its definitions and its place in socio-linguistic theory. The selection of quoted approaches illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon and indicates Roland Barthes's (1991) theory of myth as a type of speech as the basis for the research. The chapter also explains the main functions of myth and its politics, and attempts to prove its discursive dimension.

Chapter 3 continues the considerations on myth to some extent but essentially concentrates on the woman-body-identity relation in the context of the beauty myth. It discusses the socio-linguistic and cultural image of the contemporary woman, gender as a crucial component and determinant in social constructions and as a discourse feature, the notion of values and the concepts of prototypes, archetypes and stereotypes of women and femininity. Other important issues which, in the author's opinion, required attention in the context of the present thesis include the social construction of the body, the government of the body and feminist views on the female body in patriarchal culture. Brief discussion of the issue of contemporary capitalism, on the other hand, was intended to make the functioning of the beauty myth in contemporary culture and discourse more intelligible.

Chapter 4 is a research design which discusses aims of the study, explains the choice of the corpus, describes research characteristics and assumptions as well as research procedures.

Chapter 5 constitutes a discourse analysis and at the beginning applies a slightly modified version of Pisarkowa's (1978: 19) typology concerning classes of topics characteristic for everyday talk to examine the content of horoscopes. It, then, proceeds to a quantitative analysis of the corpus, and also looks at readability characteristics. The chapter also investigates different aspects of horoscopolical discourse, such as discourse participants and the immediate context of horoscopolical texts as a key to the overall comprehension of the discourse in question. Finally, it examines five features of the language of success as a characteristic feature of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes and the discourse of the beauty myth itself.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the beauty myth in horoscopolical discourse and discusses myth in relation to values, stereotypes, body and identity, as exemplified with the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

Chapter 7 attempts to create a model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope which encompasses the observations made in the previous chapters. This prototype may be considered as a model representative of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in terms of their generic features (linguistic, compositional and conceptual). It can also be regarded as the horoscope which realises the beauty myth to an eminent extent, due to the fact of being the best example in the category of

Cosmopolitan horoscopes. In this chapter, the author also presents the mechanism of the beauty myth, which she attempts to explain with the use of the concept of the language of values by Puzynina (1991; 1992) and the concept of myth as a type of speech by Barthes (1991).

Chapter 8 summarises the main points of the entire thesis, presents conclusions and closes the considerations commenting on the research results with critical reservation.

The chapters may overlap at times to some extent, which seems inescapable in the case of such multidimensional problem matter. This is because discourse is a common denominator for the beauty myth phenomenon, horoscopes as its representation and social constructions as assumed to have discursive nature. The same multidimensionality enforced the introduction of redundancies and a focus on selected areas of the study, despite the awareness that critical readers may consider some points as insufficiently discussed and not exhaustive enough, hopefully indicating to other researchers some inspiring areas to explore in more detail.

Furthermore, it has to be emphasized that the dissertation constitutes a socio-linguistic approach to the beauty myth and has a character of Critical Discourse Analysis. It is language that is studied primarily, though the interdisciplinary character of the approach applied allows the examination of language as a form of social practice and the investigation of its use in order to reveal how it relates to socio-political structures as well as how it establishes and reinforces social power relations.

The abovementioned reasons entail certain consequences. The theories and methodologies applied allowed the building of a framework for the present analysis, yet the framework leaves some space for further, more in-depth investigation which the author has decided to restrict to a necessary minimum, as an exhaustive study would go beyond the scope of this work. Such a premise concerns, for example, the question of whether the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes manifest typical features of women's speech, which might actually be a topic for another dissertation.

As far as the corpus is concerned, the horoscope texts were collected in their unaltered form by the author of the paper. They were downloaded from the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website. The author has decided not to correct the mistakes which occur in the horoscopes, and to examine the research material in its original, authentic form. The corpus is presented in *Appendix*. The decision to attach the whole corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes has been made because, despite the sample size in terms of number, the individual texts analysed have a very condensed form. Moreover, the research sample is comparable to that studied by

Ziębka-Białożny (2009), and this fact has also prompted the decision to include all texts. Each horoscope has a symbol ascribed (e.g. H-1, H-2, H-3) to allow better navigation and reference between the thesis and the appendix.

The work also includes *Bibliography*, *Index of tables*, *Index of figures*, *Summary in Polish* and *Summary in English*.

It is perhaps also important to mention that since the author was not obliged to conform to any specific formal requirements in terms of style sheet, it has been decided to arrange the work according to the best of her own knowledge concerning academic writing conventions. The author has, however, referred to the dissertation handbooks by Mendel (2010) and by Paltridge and Starfield (2007), and also to the document entitled *Style Sheet of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures* [WWW₂₄], which is available online.

Lastly, all the quotations originally written in Polish needed to be translated into English. This was done by the author herself, and it is clarified each time with a note ‘translation mine’, placed in the footnote.

In conclusion, then, despite any shortcomings that the dissertation may have, the author hopes that this socio-linguistic expedition to the realm of the beauty myth will be sufficient and intriguing enough for critical readers.

CHAPTER ONE

Dimensions of discourse

For discourse to be discussed thoroughly, with no single aspect left behind, seems barely manageable, taking into account its complexity. This is due to the diversity in approaches, interdisciplinary call as well as the multidimensionality, vagueness and many-sided character of the concept and phenomenon itself. On the other hand, it might be an advantage that discourse offers such tremendous potential and provides so many diversified research possibilities for humanities.

This chapter focuses on what is necessary for the research, though it undoubtedly does not exhaust the issue.

1.1 Defining the indefinable – what is discourse?

As etymological dictionaries indicate, the term *discourse* is of Latin origin. According to *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* by Eric Partridge (2006: 654), the Latin noun *discursus* derives from *discurrere* which means “to run to and fro”. This only confirms what Klein (1966: 458) claims in the earlier source *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*; namely, the Latin *discursus* means “a running to and fro”, in Late Latin used to mean “a conversation, discourse” and derives from *discurs-(um)* which happens to be a past participle stem of *discurrere*.

The popular understanding of the notion can be explained by the suggestions of contemporary word dictionaries of different meanings of *discourse*. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995: 387) has three concise definitions: (1) “a serious speech or piece of writing on a particular subject”, (2) “serious conversation between people”, or (3) “the language used in particular kinds of speech or writing”. *Oxford Dictionaries Online* [WWW₂₉] also indicate three possibilities: (1) “written or spoken communication or debate”, (2) “a formal discussion of a topic in speech or writing”, or (3) “a connected series of utterances; a text or conversation”. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* [WWW₃₀] suggests four definitions, the last one of which is claimed to be archaic:

(1) “verbal expression in speech or writing”, (2) “verbal exchange or conversation”, (3) “a formal, lengthy treatment of a subject, either written or spoken”, or (4) “the process or power of reasoning”. The online *Thesaurus* [WWW₃₁], on the other hand, defines it as “dialogue, dissertation”. This terminological divergence and reference to particular speech genres reveal how discourse is equated with different communicative events in common knowledge.

In linguistics, although the complexity of definitions and the diversity of approaches may appear to be confusing, there is one certainty no discourse researcher would deny – as van Dijk (1997: 2) claims, “discourse is a form of *language use*.”

According to *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (2002: 160-161), *discourse* is

a general term for examples of language use, i.e. language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication.

Whereas grammar refers to the rules a language uses to form grammatical units such as CLAUSE, PHRASE, and SENTENCE, discourse normally refers to larger units of language such as paragraphs, conversations, and interviews. Sometimes the study of both written and spoken discourse is known as DISCOURSE ANALYSIS; some researchers however use discourse analysis to refer to the study of spoken discourse and TEXT LINGUISTICS to refer to the study of written discourse.

In POSTMODERNISM and CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, discourse is used to indicate not only any kind of talk but also the meanings and values embedded in talk. In this sense, a **dominant discourse** refers to an institutionalized way of thinking and talking about things.

The above-mentioned definition already touches upon the study of discourse, although at this point only the meaning, specificity and scope of the concept of discourse itself are attempted to be established. As Howarth (2008: 14) argues, these are determined by specific theoretical assumptions formulated within particular paradigms.

According to van Dijk (1997: 3-4), *discourse* is an ambiguous concept, in the sense that it is difficult to define in an entirely explicit way. The very term can be used in an abstract way, as are *language* or *communication*, for example. Van Dijk also claims that “when we characterize discourse as a communicative event we refer to discourse in *general*” (: 3-4). However, it can also be defined in more concrete terms and refer to particular instances of text or talk. According to the scholar, there is yet another use “which is not limited to language use or communicative interaction, but which may rather or also refer to ideas or ideologies” (: 4). Simultaneously, van Dijk takes his own stance and emphasises that it is necessary “to know more about the properties of the sentences or other components and constructs of discourse, as well as about their mutual relations, about the rules that govern the way they may or should be combined or the other conditions or constraints that may be involved” (: 5). He also claims that apart from describing discourse as language use, analyses should also include other dimensions of the phenomenon, “namely the study of discourse as

the communication of beliefs, or as a form of social interaction, as well as [...] the ways language use, communication or interaction are related to the social context” (: 5). In this way, van Dijk clarifies the dimensions of discourse: *language use*, *communication (cognition)* and *interaction*.

Again, different linguists approach and define discourse in various ways. Here is a compilation of some of the definitions/approaches, a collection that is surely not complete, though, hopefully, adequate and sufficient for realising the specificity of the concept.

Stubbs (1983: 1) claims discourse to be “language above the sentence or above the clause.”

Fasold (1990: 65) tries to convince that “the study of discourse is the study of any aspect of language use.”

Cook (1990: 6) defines discourse as “language in use, for communication.” He also suggests a somewhat “mathematical” definition: *text + context = discourse*. Indeed, the researcher maintains “discourse is text and context together, interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by the participants (who are both part of the context and observers of it)” (Cook 1992: 2).

In his guide to linguistic concepts, Crystal (1992: 25) explains that discourse is a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit, such as a sermon, argument, joke, or narrative. [...] Discourse knowledge, in a broad sense, subsumes the whole set of norms, preferences and expectations which relate language to context, enabling users to produce and interpret the range of discourse units in a language.

Gee (1996: 127), on the other hand, considers discourses to be “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes.”

According to Candlin (1997: iix), the term discourse refers to language in use, as a process which is socially situated. [...] discourse is a means of talking and writing about and acting upon worlds, a means which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices within these worlds, and in so doing both reproduces and constructs afresh particular socialdiscursive practices, constrained or encouraged by more macro movements in the overarching social formation.

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:1) define discourse “as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”.

What Fairclough (1995: 2) means by discourse is “a form of social practice”. He uses the term to refer to both spoken and written language use and extends it “to include other types of semiotic activity (i.e. activity which produces meanings), such as visual images (e.g. photography, film, video, diagrams) and non-verbal communication (e.g. gestures)” (: 54). Fairclough (1992a: 8) claims that “discourse *constitutes* the social.” According to the linguist,

“three dimensions of the social are distinguished – knowledge, social relations, and social identity – and these correspond respectively to three major functions of language. Discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies” (: 8).

Another influential stance in the discussion is taken by Foucault (1981: 52) who formulates the hypothesis “that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.” This point of view focuses rather on how meaning is organized and controlled through language in a given society. As Weedon (1987: 108) interprets the Foucauldian idea, discourse refers to

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.

This means that discourse reflects and creates social reality. As Howarth (2008: 15) claims, the phenomenon of discourse considered in this sense assumes that cognitive frames are intentionally adopted in order to mould collectively shared ideas and meanings in accordance with specific aims. And Foucault (2002: 91) himself states that:

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained) ; it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history; the problem is not therefore to ask oneself how and why it was able to emerge and become embodied at this point in time; it is, from beginning to end, historical — a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complicities of time.

There are also many Polish language researchers successfully contributing to the study of discourse.

For the media discourse researcher Lisowska-Magdziarz (2006: 16), the definition is close to the latter above; she depicts discourse as “a set of linguistic behaviours whose content and form are determined by cognitive conceptions characteristic for a particular epoch, a given type of communication, kind of activity as well as practical conditions for formulating an utterance.”²

² „zespół zachowań językowych, których treść i forma uwarunkowane są koncepcjami poznawczymi charakterystycznymi dla danej epoki, danego typu komunikacji, rodzaju działalności, a także praktycznymi warunkami formułowania wypowiedzi”; translation mine.

Gajda (2005: 12) understands discourse as “text in context, a communicative event”. Having analysed different approaches to text and discourse, the linguist indicates that the central idea is no longer *what a text is*, but *how a text works* (: 19).

Discourse may well be referred to as “a sequence of linguistic behaviours whose form depends on who is speaking, to whom, in what situation and for what purpose”³ – claims Grabias (2003: 264). He believes that discourse understood in this way implies a kind of social interaction which is performed by means of language.

In her exhaustive study of the subject, entitled *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa*, Duszak (1998) inspects a number of concepts concerning discourse, presenting both Polish and foreign researchers’ perspectives. In her own interpretation, however, Duszak (1989) lays emphasis on the pragmatic aspect in discourse analysis.

Yet another study of the phenomenon and a simultaneous in-depth review of approaches is Miczka’s (2002) monograph - *Kognitywne struktury sytuacyjne i informacyjne w interpretacji dyskursu*. For her, discourse becomes part of the cognitive field of research. Poprawa (2009: 27) mentions that Miczka considers discourse as “an intellectual process displaying a different degree of schematization, which realizes itself in a text”⁴.

To sum up, discourse owing its specificity to its interdisciplinary character provides broad methodological horizons for empirical research on the one hand, but on the other requires individual definitional specification. The approach to discourse and its analysis has changed from those which focus more on text linguistics, to those considered in a much broader sense, including ideology-oriented aspects. It has changed in both vertical and horizontal dimension, so to speak. Most naturally, new concepts have developed historically as well as have been investigated by researchers representing multiple humanistic disciplines, such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy, literature or psychology. These concepts take different, often divergent stands.

As Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton (2003: 1) conclude, despite definitional struggles, all of the approaches to discourse basically fall into three general categories, under the headings: “anything beyond the sentence”, “language in use” and “a broad range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language.”

Nevertheless, for the sake of this particular study, a consensual definition has to be created here. The perspective adopted is a socio-cultural-linguistic one. Therefore, discourse

³ “[Dyskursem nazwijmy] ciąg zachowań językowych, których postać zależy od tego, kto mówi, do kogo, w jakiej sytuacji i w jakim celu.” Translation mine.

⁴ “[dyskurs jest] procesem intelektualnym, wykazującym różny stopień schematyzacji, który realizuje się w tekście”; translation mine.

is to be referred to as language in use, serving specific purposes in a particular social reality/context, or in other words, as a deliberate, intentional communicative event in a given social situation. It is to be understood as a specific historically and culturally determined system of meanings which happen to shape individual and collective identity. This perspective necessarily entails political dimension and, therefore, requires a critical analysis which will be mentioned later in the paper.

1.2 Key aspects of discourse and discourse analysis

A general definition has already been laid down. However, it is now important to examine the key aspects of discourse in greater depth, since they all seem to constitute elements of the discourse machinery and are significant variables in discourse analysis and its critical assessment. The investigation oscillates around text and context matter, discourse community, functions of discourse and social cognitive structures accompanying the phenomenon.

1.2.1 Text, context, discourse

Any linguistic study assumes texts to be analysed, either spoken or written. Discourse has an inescapably linguistic dimension. Context, on the other hand, seems to be a specific binding material. The distinction between text and discourse, however, is not particularly obvious, unanimous or explicit among linguists, with the same reasons as defining the notion of discourse – ambiguities come from divergence of approaches.

Differentiating between text and discourse is disputable, since while some linguists use the terms interchangeably, others suggest making a clear opposition. The fundamental question is, therefore, whether text analysis equals discourse analysis.

The already cited linguist – Guy Cook (1992) – seems to put clear boundaries between the notions of *text*, *context* and *discourse*. What he claims is that the latter's necessary constituents are text and context together, and discourse analysis must include both: "the study of language must take context into account, because language is always in context, and there are no acts of communication without participants, intertexts, situations, paralanguage and substance" (: 2). According to Cook, the term *text* refers to "linguistic forms, temporarily and artificially separated from context for the purposes of analysis" (: 1-2). *Context*, on the other hand, embraces several elements:

1. *substance* (the physical material by means of which text is conveyed or transmitted)
2. *music* and *pictures*

3. *paralanguage* (all kinds of non-linguistic behaviour carrying meaning either in speech or writing, e.g. gestures, facial expressions, letter size or typeface)
4. *situation* (the perceived-by-participants properties and relations of objects and people close to the text)
5. *co-text* (text preceding and following what is being analysed, which is perceived by participants to constitute part of the same discourse)
6. *intertext* (what is perceived by participants as being part of different discourse, though associated with the text being analysed and, therefore, affecting the interpretation)
7. *participants* (senders, addressers, addressees and receivers⁵ together with their intentions, interpretations, knowledge, beliefs, interpersonal attitudes, affiliations and feelings, who constitute a part of the context and observe it at the same time)
8. *function* (the senders' or addressers' intention behind the text, or the receivers' or addressees' perceived intention hiding in the message).

Cook (1990: 156) defines discourse as “stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive” whereas text as “a stretch of language interpreted formally, without context” (: 158). In his concept, therefore, the distinction between the terms seems to be shown more clearly and explicitly.

Adam (1990: 23) seems to share Cook's view. He suggests the following equation: *discourse = text + conditions of verbal production*. Consequently, text is defined by means of the reverse equation, i.e. *text = discourse – conditions of verbal production*. According to Adam, “discourse is an utterance which may obviously be characterised by means of text features, but it is above all a discursive act performed in a given situation (with participants, institutions, place, time) [...]. Text, on the other hand, is an abstract object resulting from subtracting context in a specific research subject (discourse)”⁶ (: 23).

Nunan (1993: 118) suggests explaining discourse in terms of “communicative events involving language in context.” The linguist juxtaposes it with text defined as “the written record of a communicative event which conveys a complete message” (: 124). In the same manner, Nunan differentiates between discourse analysis and text analysis, claiming that while the first one involves “the functional analysis of discourse” (: 118), the other one

⁵ Cook (1992) explains the difference between these: “The ‘sender’ of a message is not always the same as the ‘addresser’, the person who originates it. Neither is the ‘receiver’ always the ‘addressee’, the person for whom it is intended.”

⁶ “dyskursem jest wypowiedzenie, które można oczywiście scharakteryzować cechami tekstowymi, ale jest to przede wszystkim akt dyskursywny dokonany w jakiejś sytuacji (z uczestnikami, instytucjami, miejscem, czasem) [...]. Natomiast tekst jest przedmiotem abstrakcyjnym wynikającym z odjęcia kontekstu w konkretnym przedmiocie badania (dyskursie)”; translation mine.

focuses on “formal features of text such as cohesion, text structure” (: 125) and “involves little reference to the extralinguistic context which gave rise to the text” (: 125).

In his considerations, Nunan (1993: 8-16) finds it important to highlight the spoken-versus-written-language opposition. Even though differences between spoken and written modes are observable in various aspects, such as grammar, lexis and lexical density, or overall communicative situation, they are by no means absolute. Both oral language and written language are instances of communicative events. However, Nunan reserves the term text “to refer to any written record of a communicative event” and the term discourse “to refer to the interpretation of the communicative event in context” (: 6-7).

Also van Dijk (1997: 3) primarily makes a distinction between two different modes of discourse, as he calls them; i.e. *talk* (spoken discourse) and *text* (written discourse). Text refers to the product of writing, whereas talk refers to the product of speaking or an interaction. They both do not, however, focus on the participants of the communicative event or any other aspect of it. Though there are obviously some notable differences, “there are enough similarities between spoken and written language use, communication and interaction to warrant inclusion of both these modes of discourse in one general notion of 'discourse'” (: 3). Therefore, according to the linguist, discourse analysis should include “the properties of text and talk and [...] the context, that is, the other characteristics of the social situation or the communicative event that may systematically influence text or talk. [...] discourse studies are about talk and text in context” (: 3).

According to Crystal (1992: 72), text refers to “a piece of naturally occurring spoken, written, or signed discourse identified for purposes of analysis. It is often a language unit with a definable communicative function, such as a conversation, a poster”. In this sense, texts can be understood as “tangible” representations of discourse. To remind the reader, at the same time Crystal defines discourse as “a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit, such as a sermon, argument, joke or narrative” (: 25). An explicit border between text and discourse seems to be a little blurred – indeed, the terms seem to be used almost interchangeably.

Brown and Yule (1988: 190) define text as “the verbal record of a communicative event”, which once again seems to work as discourse representation. A particular piece of discourse is considered as “a sample of experience of the world” (: 206).

Wilkoń (2002: 9) suggests yet another approach. He claims that text is “a written or spoken message constituting a finished or non-finished sequence of sentences or one sentence

(or a phrase functioning as a sentence), connected with a particular genre, function and semantic structure beyond sentence.”⁷

In her in-depth linguistic consideration on text, discourse and communication matters, Duszak (1998: 7-9) emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of text and discourse studies. She considers texts as a form of social interaction, rather than only a kind of individual act of expressing oneself. She explains that what accompanies text comprehension as an adequate form of social and communicative behaviour is taking into account the entire context of using a particular linguistic form. Text immersed in context constitutes discourse. This proves that discourse is inevitably dependent on socio-culturally determined meanings, their compilations, specific situational purposes and needs, communicative habits as well as various prejudices against verbal styles. Discourse is, therefore, a way of one person being with other people by means of texts, as if with their assistance.

Duszak (1998: 7-9) also points out changes in approaching text linguistics and texts themselves: texts are no longer products subject to objective study, but to subjective assessments in terms of form, content or adequacy. Furthermore, understanding text as a process enables the analysis of various aspects.

The term *text* does not necessarily evoke the immediate association with *language in use*. *Discourse* does – as Duszak (1998: 18-19) claims, citing Brown and Yule (1983: 1) as a reference. She refers to significant linguistic trends in order to expose the underpinnings of the contemporary view on text linguistics which used to treat text as a product whose elements are to serve particular communicative functions and focus on formal aspects of textuality⁸, but then rejected the idea that meaning should be regarded as necessarily located in text. According to her, the turning point came with the specification of the difference between meaning and interpretation⁹. From then on, text began to be considered as a dynamic process serving a particular function, and controlled by those involved in a specific act of communication. Duszak (: 18-19) claims that “text is defined as an act of communication, manifesting hallmarks of textuality”¹⁰ and suggests that Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) were the precursors in investigating this field of study. Duszak believes that “analysing text in context is the most legitimate way of looking at phenomena of verbal interpersonal

⁷ “[...] przekaz pisany lub oralny tworzący skończony lub nieskończony ciąg zdań lub jedno zdanie (bądź wyrażenie w funkcji zdania), związany z określonym gatunkiem, funkcją i strukturą semantyczną ponadzdaniową.”; translation mine.

⁸ Duszak (1998: 18) refers to early structuralist works of Isenberg (1970; 1976; 1977); Harweg (1968); Helbig (1975) and the representative of generative linguistics van Dijk (1972).

⁹ Duszak (1998) refers to the works of Searle (1969) and Grice (1975).

¹⁰ “[...] tekst zdefiniowany zostaje jako akt komunikacji, wykazujący znamiona tekstualności”; translation mine.

communication”¹¹ (: 19). And this is what discourse is all about: its analysis includes the entire act of communication (text, extralinguistic features, situational context and its participants).

In the following work, text is treated as a representation of discourse as well as a tool for shaping it. Furthermore, the approach adopted is one in which broadly understood context is deemed necessary for analysis, in order to provide a more accurate socio-linguistic image of the phenomenon discussed, and to draw more complete critical conclusions. Discourse analysis takes all these components into account.

1.2.2 Discourse analysis as a research method

Discourse analysis must be reliable, objective, exhaustive, consistent and orderly. The multiplicity of approaches provides researchers with a number of possibilities, some of which, because of the limitations of this paper, are presented only briefly.

In their introductory chapter to *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton (2003: 1) claim that, generally, discourse analysis may fall into one of three categories; namely, (1) the study of language use, (2) the study of any linguistic structure beyond the sentence, or (3) the study of both linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions which accompany language and social communication.

The study of language use focuses mostly on linguistic constructs at the level of phrases or clauses, structural variants dictated by the context of discourse. The study of anything beyond the sentence is somewhat broader: it examines larger sequences of sentences and utterances, tries to explain how texts are constructed, and how they are organised in systematic ways. The third approach to discourse analysis is socio-culturally-oriented; it does not much focus on describing texts, their language structure or use, but primarily turns attention to the socio-linguistic actions that participants of particular social communities take in specific communicative events, or attempts to characterise discourse communities as well as power relations, ideological apparatus and inequalities within.

Grabias (2003: 264-265) claims that the description of discourse must include three aspects: that of psycho-physical phenomena, that of social phenomena, and that of the level of language as a semiotic system functioning in a given society according to established rules.

¹¹ “analiza tekstu w kontekście jest najbardziej zasadnym sposobem patrzenia na zjawiska międzyludzkiej komunikacji werbalnej”; translation mine.

Fairclough (1995: 56) argues that when analysing a particular type of discourse, two complementary focuses should be taken into account, i.e. communicative events and the order of discourse. As the linguist explains:

On the one hand, the analyst is concerned with the particular, with specific communicative events, for instance a particular newspaper editorial or television documentary. The concern here is always with both continuity and change – in what ways is this communicative event normative, drawing upon familiar types and formats, and in what ways is it creative, using old resources in new ways? On the other hand, the analyst is concerned with the general, the overall structure of the order of discourse, and the way it is evolving in the context of social and cultural changes. The focus here is upon the configuration of genres and discourses which constitute the order of discourse, the shifting relationships between them, and between this order of discourse and other socially adjacent ones. (: 56)

Cook (1992: 1-2), as discussed earlier, stresses the importance of including both text (linguistic forms) and context (substance, music and pictures, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants, function) in discourse analysis, and of paying attention to the interaction of elements in a discourse type.

Van Dijk (1997: 29-31) attempts to summarise and enumerate the basic principles a discourse analysis should incorporate:

1. *naturally occurring text and talk*: real data, not edited in any way or invented
2. *contexts*: incorporating local, global, social and cultural contexts in the study of discourse, on the assumption that they constitute an integral element of it
3. *discourse as talk*: talk is treated as the “primordial form of discourse” and, thus, more willingly investigated in contemporary discourse studies (though written texts should not be neglected)
4. *discourse as social practice of members*: discourse is treated as a form of social practice of language users, performed in a particular sociocultural and political context
5. *members' categories*: analysts should be careful not to impose their own notions and categories upon social members whose interpretations, hierarchies and categorisations concerning the social reality, discourse and ways of conduct should be respected
6. *sequentiality*: the production and reception of discourses is of linear and sequential character; this linearity is connected with coherence, i.e. links and relationships of structural units with the ones preceding and following them
7. *constructivity*: constitutive elements of discourse may be used functionally, interpreted or analysed as parts of larger discourses, which implies that they may have hierarchical structures
8. *levels and dimensions*: any discourse tends to have a layered, multidimensional structure, different levels and aspects, but while researchers try to deconstruct discourse

and then find the relationships between the levels, language users tend to “strategically manage several levels or dimensions of discourse” simultaneously

9. *meaning and function*: an interest in meaning – what something/someone means – implies functionality and explanation – why something is being said or meant

10. *rules*: since language, communication and discourse are governed according to “socially shared grammatical, textual, communicative or interactional rules”, researchers may investigate their manifestations, violations or modifications, as well as try to explain possible functions or consequences of such violations

11. *strategies*: discourse analysis may provide an insight into mental and interactional strategies that people acquire and apply to achieve their communicative and social goals

12. *social cognition*: in discourse analysis, “the fundamental role of cognition, that is, of mental processes and representations in the production and understanding of text and talk” has to be realised, since cognitive abilities are to a great extent socially constructed and socio-culturally determined; “cognition is the interface between discourse and society” and social cognitive mechanisms include, for instance, knowledge, beliefs, values, ideologies, norms, attitudes, stereotypes.

Van Dijk’s (1997) summary of the principles which should govern any discourse analysis is a very important point of reference for the present dissertation, since it outlines the overall scope of the study. For the purposes of the research, Cook’s (1992) concept, which was also discussed in the previous subchapter, proves useful too. This is because in his simple equation, according to which discourse equals text plus context, the scholar encompasses the essential research areas which will be subject to socio-linguistic investigations in the research part of the work.

1.2.3 Discourse analysis as a corpus-based study

The following linguistic study is necessarily based upon a collection of texts. This is why a corpus-based approach to discourse analysis should be mentioned at least briefly.

According to Shehzad (2005: 37), corpus linguistics is not entirely new. It can be traced back to the traditional grammarians who used to make attempts to support their theories through the collection of exemplary texts. This approach, however, is not consistent with the modern understanding of corpus linguistics, since the examples the scholars searched for were collected with predetermined ideas on the nature of the instances they were looking for. Structuralists made quantitative analyses and statistical evidence more popular. Corpora

used to be compiled manually; nowadays, with the advance of technology and the development of computer science, large corpora of texts are stored on computers. In order to investigate various aspects of language use in natural contexts, linguists can benefit from a number of computer-based tools.

Before a discourse researcher begins their socio-linguistic exploration, they have to decide where to find the discourse of interest, which aspects they wish to focus on, and how large the corpus should be to constitute a representative sample. The techniques of data analysis are equally important.

The corpus-based approach to discourse analysis seems beneficial in many aspects, though it may also prove problematic. According to Upton and Cohen (2009: 3),

the advantages of corpus approach for the study of discourse, lexis, and grammatical variation include the emphasis on the representativeness of the text sample, and the computational tools for investigating distributional patterns across discourse contexts. One specific research emphasis for discourse studies of structure 'beyond the sentence' has been the attempt to segment a text into higher-level structural units. The 'units of analysis' in corpus-based studies of discourse structure must be well-defined discourse units: the segments of discourse that provide the building blocks of texts. One of the major methodological problems to be solved by any corpus-based analysis of discourse structure, then, is deciding on a unit of analysis.

In his peculiar, insightful manual on corpus-based studies, Sinclair (1991) gathers valuable pieces of advice and provides guidance on the practicalities of navigating corpus linguistics. In the linguist's considerations, *discourse* means much the same as *text*. He does not make a distinction between the spoken and written form of discourse and defines it briefly as “language in use – naturally-occurring spoken or written language” (: 172). As for the term *text*, he suggests two possible variants: countable and uncountable treatment of the word. Namely, “a text is a complete and continuous piece of spoken or written language”, whereas (uncountable) “text is continuous spoken or written language” (: 175). In Sinclair's publication, it refers to “language in machine-readable form” (: 175). The term *corpus*, on the other hand, stands for “a collection of naturally-occurring language text, chosen to characterize a state or variety of a language” (: 175). There are, however, two kinds of corpora that the linguist describes. According to Sinclair, one is *sample corpus* – “a finite collection of texts, often chosen with great care and studied in detail” (: 171-172). Such a corpus, once established, is not edited in any way. The other is *monitor corpus* – which, as Sinclair puts it, “is just beginning to take shape”, it “re-uses language text that has been prepared in machine-readable form for other purposes – for typesetters of newspapers, magazines, books, and, increasingly, word-processors; and the spoken language mainly for legal or bureaucratic reasons” (: 171-172).

Another compendium on corpus-based investigation of discourse structure is proposed by Biber, Connor and Upton (2007). These linguists claim that two approaches to the linguistic analysis of texts and discourse can be identified, falling under the corpus-based-investigation-of-discourse-structure heading: “one focusing on the distribution and functions of surface linguistic features – corpus studies of language use in discourse (which typically disregards the existence of individual texts) – and the second focusing on the internal organization of texts – discourse studies of linguistic structure 'beyond the sentence' in particular texts” (: 10). Discourse studies of language use are usually of a quantitative nature, examine extensive text corpora using the techniques of corpus linguistics and analyse the linguistic aspects of discourse taken from various registers, both spoken and written. Discourse studies of linguistic structure 'beyond the sentence' are usually qualitative in nature, and their investigation comes down to a thorough analysis of a limited corpus of texts; the analysis concerns the internal structure of texts representing a single genre.

Biber, Connor and Upton (2007), however, do not content themselves with this differentiation. They present a number of approaches to corpus-based discourse analysis which they classify as *top-down* and *bottom-up* in nature. The theories of superstructures for various types of texts that fall into the top-down category appear under different headings, according to Biber, Connor and Upton (: 14-15), i.e. the idea of macrostructures by van Dijk (1980), Hoey's (1983; 1986) problem-solution patterns, Tirkkonen-Condid's (1985) superstructures of arguments, or the concept of story grammars by Mandler and Johnson (1977), whose precursors were Labov and Waletzky (1967) with their model for analysis of oral narratives, later also used and developed by Martin and Rothery (1986) in written discourse analysis. Other representatives who adopted top-down approaches to the study of text structure, mentioned by the authors, are Mann and Thompson (1992), Callow and Callow (1992), or Swales (1981; 1990). The latter's so called 'move analysis' is of particular interest to Biber, Connor and Upton (2007: 15) who pay much attention to this specific genre analysis in which

the text is described as a sequence of 'moves', where each move represents a stretch of text serving a particular communicative function. The analysis begins with the development of an analytical framework, identifying and describing the move types that can occur in this genre: these are the functional/communicative distinctions that moves can serve in the target genre. Subsequently, selected texts are segmented into moves, noting the move type of each move. The overall discourse structure of a text can be described in relation to the sequence of move types.

According to Biber, Connor and Upton (2007: 17), and in contrast to the top-down-in-nature analyses of discourse which have a relatively long tradition, the bottom-up approach has been applied in linguistic studies only recently with the development of computational

solutions. It is not normally applied in the study of individual texts, but allows the analysis of even very large corpora, using advanced automatic computational techniques. The example of such an approach which the linguists cite and focus on in their considerations is the 'Vocabulary-Based Discourse Unit' (VBDU) analysis.

As Biber, Connor and Upton (2007: 17) claim, the difference between the two perspectives cited above is

the role of the functional versus linguistic analyses. In the top-down approach, the functional framework is primary. Thus, the first step in the analysis is to determine the possible discourse unit types (e.g. move types) and provide an operational definition for each one. This functional framework is then used to segment texts into discourse units. Linguistic analysis is secondary in a top-down approach, serving an interpretive role to investigate the extent to which functionally-defined discourse units also have systematic linguistic characteristics.

In contrast, the linguistic description is primary in the bottom-up approach. Texts are automatically segmented into VBDUs based on vocabulary patterns, and then VBDUs are grouped into categories based on the use of a wide range of lexico-grammatical features. Functional analysis is secondary in VBDU analysis, serving an interpretive role to investigate the extent to which linguistically-defined discourse unit categories also have systematic functional characteristics.

In computer-assisted text and corpus analysis, Stubbs (2003: 304) tries to promulgate the examination and comparison of texts in terms of “the contribution of words and phrases to text cohesion, the intertextual relations between texts” and “the extent to which our linguistic competence includes knowledge of norms of language use.” In his approach to corpus studies, Stubbs makes a clear differentiation between the terms *text* and *corpus*. Namely, “a text is any stretch of naturally occurring language in use, spoken or written, which has been produced, independently of the analyst, for some real communicative purpose”, whereas “a corpus is a large collection of computer-readable texts, of different text-types, which represent spoken and/or written usage” (: 305). By the word *large*, the linguist means at least millions. He also points out that no text corpora constitute fully representative samples of the whole language. Nonetheless, as Stubbs admits, “such collections can at least be designed to represent major dimensions of language variation” (: 305).

To sum up, corpus-based analyses of discourse enable an in-depth insight into multiple discoursal aspects. Linguists are equipped with a diversity of approaches and modern computational tools which allow for detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis. This constitutes a reliable framework for scientific observations and conclusions. It is, however, important to remember that the results can rarely (if ever) be generalised and applied to the whole language, or to all individual instances. It is tendencies which are observable and can actually be observed.

1.2.4 Discourse community

Discourse community is yet another notion that requires explanation and clarification. Not only does the term occur in different variants – for example, Ziębka-Białożny (2009: 13) cites as many as four: *disciplinary community*, *communicative community*, *rhetorical community* and *community of practice*, but it also acquires various interpretations. Furthermore, the notion is often juxtaposed with the concept of *speech community*. The latter, however, functions as a broader concept.

However blurred the scope of the idea of discourse community, applying it in linguistic studies on specialist discourse proves legitimate – claims Duszak (1998: 256) – since it allows the researcher to “analyse the characteristics of specific types of text occurrences in terms of human properties.”¹²

Chin (1994: 452) seems to share Duszak’s view and also finds the construct of discourse community significant, since it makes it possible to “identify factors influencing writers that exist outside of the immediate context for the production of texts”. According to the scholar, “discourse communities are typically defined in terms of loosely organised groups of individuals whose use of discourse is governed by tacit and generally accepted ‘rules’ for text production and function and who agree upon the meanings attached to these uses and functions” (: 452).

The compilation of rules might depend on a number of features of a specific discourse community. Doheny-Farina (1992: 296) suggests that these are “actions, beliefs, habits, language, rhetorical practices, and stylistic conventions that are tacit and routine for the members”. And as Chin (1994: 452) comments, this means that any discourse which happens to be produced “within and for a community then would adhere, to a lesser or greater extent, to these conventional ways of making meaning”.

The father of the concept under discussion, nevertheless, is Swales (1990). In the first place, he argues that differentiation between the notions of *speech community* and *discourse community* is necessary. For several reasons suggested by the linguist, these should not be used interchangeably. He admits that the definition of speech community has evolved, and provides some examples: from Bloomfield (1933) considering speech community as a group of people sharing similar linguistic rules, through Labov (1966) focusing on shared norms among speakers, or Fishman (1971) emphasizing regularities in the use of language, to Hymes (1974: 51) who defines it “as a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct

¹² “[Pozwala ona mianowicie] analizować cechy określonych typów zdarzeń tekstowych w kategoriach właściwości ludzkich.”; translation mine.

and interpretation of speech". Swales (1990) ascribes a *sociorhetorical* character to discourse communities, as opposed to a *sociolinguistic* one characterising speech communities. Moreover, discourse communities tend to be *centrifugal* (they separate people into different groups), while speech communities are more likely to be *centripetal* (they absorb people into the community and bond them together).

Swales's (1990: 24-27) conceptualisation of 'discourse community' includes six features which are supposed to characterise the term. Firstly, a discourse community possesses an established and commonly accepted set of public goals. Secondly, its members use so-called participatory mechanisms to communicate effectively; for instance, telecommunications, conversation or correspondence. The mechanisms may vary depending on the community. Thirdly, the mechanisms are used primarily to exchange information among participants and to receive feedback; the purpose of such information exchange may vary depending on the common goals. Furthermore, in order to fulfil certain aims, a discourse community is equipped with different genres to meet discoursal expectations which may include the choice of topics, form, functions and other components. In addition, what characterises a particular discourse community is specific lexis used by its members. Finally, a discourse community is never stable, but rather is dynamic. Its members come and go, and its existence is dependent on a relevant balance between the so-called *novices* and *experts*.

Another view is presented by Scollon and Scollon (1995: 127-154). First of all, they suggest different terminology: *systems of discourse*. The linguists emphasize the significance of four aspects of culture, constituting important factors in intercultural communication: (1) *ideology* including general worldview, system of cultural values and religious beliefs; (2) *socialisation* embracing both formal and informal teaching and learning (or acquiring) how to function in a system of discourse as a member of a given culture, the language and patterns of social behaviour, and concepts concerning the nature of humans and ideology about human society; (3) *forms of discourse* which refer to functions of language and non-verbal ways of communication; as well as (4) *face systems* in the sense of a broadly understood, established social organisation concerning the aspects of kinship, interpersonal relationships, the concept of the self, ingroup-outgroup relationships and social solidarity. Such an approach enables the observation of the complexity of the phenomenon of discourse communities and their etymology, based upon their specific needs and the forms of text by which they are realised.

1.2.5 Discourse community and identity

It is not the intention here to explore the complex concept of identity. However, since this is an aspect of particular interest in the research, it is necessary to clarify the approach adopted.

The first assumption which has to be made is to treat identity as constituted in discourse. Though relatively consistent, it is also assumed to be contingent upon a number of conditions and factors within an interactional context, and therefore displays a dynamic and fluid character, fragmentary at any given point in time. This approach allows the assumption that both an individual sense of identity and collective identity are subject to discourses. Being a member of a given discourse community entails interference in one's identity profile. At the macro level, social identities might be constructed, directed and changed. Both are inescapably linked.

The attentive reader will certainly notice that in the above paragraph three types of identity have been mentioned already: individual, collective and social. One more could be added to these, i.e. personal. However, clarifying the definitional nuances of these is of no importance to the paper – their differentiation would lack any particular application here. Thus, it is assumed that individual and personal identity can be treated interchangeably. Similarly, collective and social identity can be referred to interchangeably. In the consideration on discourse dimensions delivered in the following paper, types of identity as such are of incomparably minor concern in comparison with the matter of how-they-come-into-existence-and-what-discourse-has-to-do-with-it. In fact, even the differentiation between individual and collective identity does not seem crucial, since collective identity simply cannot exist beyond individuals. The two cannot be detached from each other. As Krzyżanowski (2008: 274) claims, quoting Triandafyllidou and Wodak (2003: 211) as a reference, the reason for this is that an individual's identity is always socially constructed through social interaction, either between individuals or between individuals and groups.

Mention of the theory of social identity theory seems unavoidable at this point. The social identity theory was developed by Tajfel and his colleagues, and discussed in Tajfel (1982) or Tajfel and Turner (1986), for example. As Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 25) explain Tajfel's ideas, "social identity (as opposed to personal identity) is defined by individual identification with a group: a process constituted firstly by a reflexive knowledge of group membership, and secondly by an emotional attachment or specific disposition to this belonging." What matters are "the social-cognitive processes of membership, and the way that 'belonging' is both initiated and sustained" (: 25). The theory also explores the idea of ingroup-outgroup relationships and assumes that "identities are constituted through a process

of difference defined in a relative or flexible way dependent upon the activities in which one is engaged” (: 25).

Scollon and Scollon (1995: 245-248) translate this psychological view into a linguistic one. They primarily concentrate on two aspects: identity and membership. Their assumption is that discourse systems within which a person is a member partially influence his or her identity:

one of the major functions of a discourse system is to give a sense of identity to its members. The positive side of this function is that members of a discourse system come to feel comfortable in communication with other members of the discourse system. It reduces the ambiguity in interpreting discourse. The negative side of this function is that it forms a boundary between ingroup and outgroup, and people who are not members of the discourse system are rejected by members and find it difficult to achieve membership. (: 268)

To sum up, every person is necessarily born into a number of natural systems of discourse including the closest family environment, culture, matters of gender, politics, myths, stereotypes *et cetera*. All these contribute to the shaping of one’s identity.

Since identity is a far too complex issue to be examined in detail here, let me just cite a number of the most prominent figures who happened to have theorised over it with reference to discourse. In their publication, Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 30) quote Althusser (1971) who offers an explanation of how social relation patterns and norms are acquired within discourse. According to the scholars, Althusser uses the term *interpellation* to refer to “the discursive production of the social subject” and claims that “the subordination of the subject takes place through language, as the effect of the authoritative voice that hails the individual” (: 30).

Another theorist listed by Benwell and Stokoe (2006), Gramsci (1971) also associated power with social and educational institutions as well as with the culture and media industry, claiming that it operates via discourse. As Benwell and Stokoe explain, in Gramsci’s approach “subjects give their consent to particular formations of power because the dominant cultural group generating the discourse persuades them of their essential ‘truth’, ‘desirability’ and ‘naturalness’” (: 30).

According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 30), in his theorising, Foucault (1972) goes even further depicting “identities (or ‘subjects’) [...] as the product of dominant discourses that are tied to social arrangements and practices.”

In an account just as much ideological as Foucault’s, Howard (2000: 385) speaks of the so called ‘ideological constitution of the self’. According to this view, an individual’s identity evolves in “a process of acquiring a particular ideological version of the world, liable to serve hegemonic ends and preserve the status quo” (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 31).

Another view that Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 31) refer to is represented by Derrida (1976) for whom “reality is always representation, and therefore it is language that *constitutes* the ‘I’ of the subject and brings it into being through the process of signification.” Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) examine identities in terms of a discursive phenomenon.

As Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 31) claim, however, the abovementioned models, which focus mostly on ideology and discourse as essential identity-shapers, provoke critique. They cite Hall (2000: 19), for instance, who criticises the one-sided and ideology-oriented claim that identities are mainly products of what comes from the outside of the subjects and argues that identity constitutes only a temporary meeting point between

the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and [...] the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.

In her model, social subjects do not only passively adjust, but are reflexive, recognising and developing their position within discourse. Similarly, Butler’s (1997) premise, mentioned by Benwell and Stokoe, is that “the subject is never fully determined by power, but neither is it fully determining” (: 31).

Viewing identity as a relatively stable, though still dynamic construct, subject to multiple stimuli, including discourse practices, appears reasonable. After all, this logically links to the basic thesis assumption that, as Duszak and Fairclough (2008: 16) put it, discourse is “a prime mover in social constructions”. Language and discourse contribute to shaping ideologically the identities, representations of the world and social reality, and relations between people. Fairclough (1995: 55) also admits that

language use – any text – is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief (corresponding respectively to identities, relationships and representations [...]). [...] any text makes its own small contribution to shaping these aspects of society and culture.

According to van Dijk (1998: 125), discourse constitutes a valuable source for the investigation of social identities since the construction and reproduction of social communities is indeed discursive in nature. He suggests a differentiation between personal and social/group identity. Personal identity can be defined either as “a mental representation of (personal) self as a unique human being with its own, personal experiences and biography – as represented in accumulated mental models, and the abstract self-concept derived from it, often in interaction with others”, or as “a mental representation of (social) self as a collection of group memberships, and the identification processes that are related to such membership representations” (: 119-120). Social or collective identity, on the other hand, refers to the

identity of a group as those who share knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, ideologies and “a social representation that defines their identity or social self as a group” (: 120). Additionally, in his socio-cognitive approach, the linguist admits that “social identity is as intersubjective as personal identity is a subjective construction, although both constructs are obviously a function of social interaction and negotiation, and of the attribution of identity by other people and other groups, respectively” (: 125).

1.2.6 Discourse and social practices

Fairclough (1995: 2) approaches discourse as “a form of social practice”. He suggests a distinction, however, claiming that “discourse analysis is concerned with practices as well as texts, and with both *discourse practices* and *sociocultural practices*” (: 16). Discourse practices refer to how texts are produced, received by various audiences and how they are distributed within a society. According to Fairclough, sociocultural practices, which may function at “‘situational’, ‘institutional’ and ‘societal’ levels” (: 16), build up the overall context for discourse practices. In this approach, it is the depiction of the interrelationships between particular texts, discourse practices and sociocultural practices that constitutes an ultimate challenge for a discourse researcher.

Fairclough (1992: 73) suggests a three-dimensional conception of discourse which demonstrates the connections and interrelation between text, discursive practice and social practice. *Figure 1* is its diagrammatical representation:

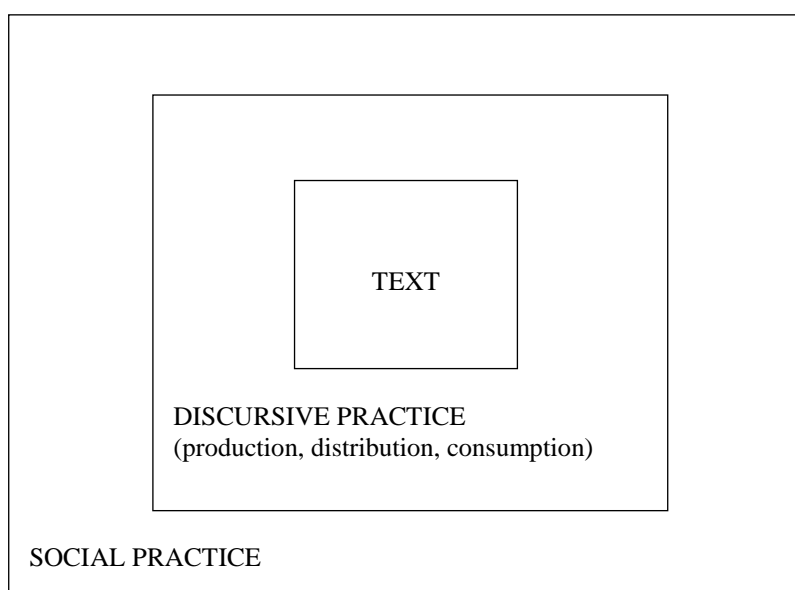


Figure 1 *Three-dimensional concept of discourse according to Norman Fairclough (1992)*

Texts – either spoken or written language – are manifestations of discursive practices. A discursive practice, on the other hand, is a particular form of social practice. Fairclough (1992: 71) explains that

analysis of a particular discourse as a piece of discursive practice focuses upon processes of text production, distribution and consumption. All of these processes are social and require reference to the particular economic, political and institutional settings within which discourse is generated.

According to van Dijk (1997: 30), similarly, no matter whether spoken or written, discourse is a form of social practice of its members embedded in specific sociocultural contexts: “language users are engaged in discourse not merely as individual persons, but also as members of various groups, institutions or cultures. Through their discourse, thus, language users may enact, confirm or challenge more comprehensive social and political structures and institutions.” Van Dijk (1992: 78) also explains that “discursive practice [...] involves processes of text production, distribution and consumption, and the nature of these processes varies between different types of discourse according to social factors.”

Earlier, in his considerations, Foucault (2002) attempted to connect discursive practices with non-discursive behaviours and institutions. He defines discursive practice as “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function” (: 132). On the other hand, he emphasizes that non-discursive practices may well determine the construction of discourse. Furthermore, according to Howarth (2008: 81-108), Foucault stresses the intentional and strategic character of discourse formation, and points out that through the use of discourses political and social institutions enforce and impose ideas ensuring social order that is beneficial at a given moment in time.

As van Leeuwen (2008: 6-7) explains,

social practices are socially regulated ways of doing things [...] Different social practices are “regulated” to different degrees and in different ways – for instance, through strict prescription, or through traditions, or through the influence of experts and charismatic role models, or through the constraints of technological resources used, and so on.

However, the scholar emphasises that the difference between social practices and their representations has to be realized and recognized: “as discourses are social cognitions, socially specific ways of knowing social practices, they can be, and are, used as resources for representing social practices in text. This means that it is possible to reconstruct discourses from texts that draw on them” (: 6).

1.2.7 Discourse as a crucial factor in social constructions

Being a prime mover in social and cultural constructions is an undeniable property of discourse. According to Duszak and Fairclough (2008: 16), discourses operating in specific social communities contribute to the shaping of social reality, influence the ways of social interaction and patterns of behaviour. Subject to so-called institutionalisation, they can be acted out by individuals as well as groups of people. Finally, elements of discourse can materialise in different features of the material world or they can be acquired as aspects of personality, and internalised as constituents of identity.

Members of given societies, embedded in specific cultures, accomplish a number of social actions determined by the broadly understood context. As van Dijk (1997: 21) maintains, “discourse as social action is being engaged in within a framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader sociocultural structures and processes.”

Fairclough (1992: 64) also admits that discourse may function in two directions - on the one hand, it is generated and shaped by the social structure, and on the other hand, it constitutes an essential factor in constructing social-cultural reality:

On the one hand, discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels: by class and other social relations at a societal level, by the relations specific to particular institutions such as law or education, by systems of classification, by various norms and conventions of both a discursive and a non-discursive nature, and so forth. Specific discursive events vary in their structural determination according to the particular social domain or institutional framework in which they are generated. On the other hand, discourse is socially constitutive. [...] Discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them. Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.

This essentially social practice can be economically-, politically-, culturally- or ideologically-oriented. Discourses are, therefore, subject to broadly understood profit-making-oriented pressures in the contemporary, commercial and consumerist social reality and simultaneously direct that reality so as to ensure the possibly most beneficial social and political establishment and guarantee economic growth.

To sum up, in Fairclough's (1992: 65) view, discursive practices may proceed in two ways according to intended effects or aims – either to maintain the actual state of affairs or to modify it appropriately: “discursive practice is constitutive in both conventional and creative ways: it contributes to reproducing society (social identities, social relationships, systems of knowledge and belief) as it is, yet also contributes to transforming society.”

Nonetheless, it is necessary to be cautious about the danger of exaggerating and going to extremes when approaching discourse as above. Fairclough (1992: 65) warns of this potential trap with the following words:

the relationship between discourse and social structure should be seen dialectically if we are to avoid the pitfalls of overemphasizing on the one hand the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand the construction of the social in discourse. The former turns discourse into a mere reflection of a deeper social reality, the latter idealistically represents discourse as the source of the social.

It is possible to claim that a phenomenon is socially constructed if it is assumed that this phenomenon has been created and shaped over time by or through social interaction.

Giddens (1984) contributes to the study of social constructionism by developing his own theory of structuration, in which he explains how the process of social construction takes place. According to the theory of structuration, individuals reproduce and produce the institutionalised rules which govern behaviour. They do it in their actions. Social reproduction refers to the copying of social rules and the distribution of social resources, whereas social production refers to alteration and innovation in society. Social reproduction entails, therefore, the reinforcement of social rules, whereas social production leads to social change due to the behaviour of individuals and groups.

As Giddens (1984: 25) claims,

structure, as recursively organized sets of rules and resources, is out of time and space, save in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces and is marked by an 'absence of the subject'. The social systems in which structure is recursively implicated, on the contrary, comprise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space. Analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction.

The sociologist emphasises, however, that the theory of the duality of structure is crucial to the idea of structuration. By this, he means that the constitution of agents and structures implies a duality rather than a dualism. They should not be treated as two independent sets of phenomena since, as Giddens maintains, "the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (: 25).

Furthermore, as Giddens (1984: 29-30) argues, the concept of communication, as an element of interaction, is more inclusive than communicative intention, but in his theory of structuration, the scholar regards them as equally important aspects of duality rather than in terms of a mutually exclusive dualism.

1.2.8 Discourse and power relations

Power has a discursive dimension. As Duszak and Fairclough (2008: 17) claim, unbalanced power relations are partially influenced by ideologies of inherently discursive character. Since discourse is an intrinsic component of society, it accompanies and determines the direction of all injustices within it (van Dijk 1997: 23). These are of particular interest to scholars who engage in social and political critique. Obviously, the connection between discourse and social structures makes it also subject to critical discourse analysis whose essence is described later in the dissertation.

To begin with, there is a considerable split observable in the approaches to discourse and its analysis, and possible pitfalls have to be noted. According to Pennycook (1994: 119), on the one hand, discourse analysis is treated as “a purely linguistic analysis of suprasentential relations” and “the language-using subject is seen as a more-or-less autonomous actor who establishes meanings by intention and interference.” On the other hand, as the scholar emphasises, critical discourse analysis (whose concern is basically power-relations-oriented) comes down to “a much more politicized view of the subject who is, indeed, called into being [...] by discourse or ideology” (: 119). He criticises both the assumption of “a completely free-willed subject” (: 126) and the assumption viewing a subject as ultimately determined by ideologies smuggled in discursive practices. Nevertheless, Pennycook (: 128) sees a certain golden mean in Foucault's idea:

Discourse in this sense [...] does not refer to language or uses of language, but to ways of organizing meaning that are often, though not exclusively realized through language. Discourses are about the creation and limitation of possibilities, they are systems of power/knowledge (*pouvoir/savoir*) within which we take up subject positions. [...] it allows to understand how meaning is produced not at the will of a unitary humanist subject, not as a quality of a linguistic system, and not as determined by socio-economic relations, but rather through a range of power/knowledge systems that organize texts, create the conditions of possibility for different language acts, and are embedded in social institutions.

Foucault (1995: 27) himself formulates his conception and exposes the correlation between power and knowledge claiming that power actually produces knowledge and power and knowledge imply each other in a direct way. According to the researcher, no power relation exists without the correlative constitution of a given field of knowledge, and there is also no knowledge that does not simultaneously presuppose and constitute power relations.

In another work, Foucault (1998: 92-93) extensively elaborates on the issue of power, its omnipresence and mechanisms as follows:

power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and

lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. [...] Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. [...] power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.

Foucault seems to approach discourse and its functioning in social life with a dose of ideology – he views discourse as one of the essential elements in power construction. Later in his considerations on power and discourse, Foucault (1980: 93) explains his point of view in such a way:

What I mean is this: in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

Among specialists in the field, van Dijk (2003: 358-363) also takes his stance and approaches social power in terms of dominance and control over discourse, communication and mind. He claims that particular groups controlling the minds and actions of other groups gain this privilege thanks to their access to certain social resources (e.g. information and knowledge, status and authority, money or fame), public discourse and aspects of communication. Apart from dominated groups, specific social aspects or situations may be under control, although this power can be to a greater or lesser extent resisted, rejected, opposed, or on the contrary, tolerated, accepted, or even taken for granted and considered as a natural part of everyday life (even though essentially harmful, prejudiced or abusive). Power can be enforced through laws or integrated and legitimated in commonly accepted norms, habits and traditions. Swaying people's minds, i.e. influencing their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, ideologies, a sense of identity, often through persuasion or manipulation, and often on an unconscious level, enables the control of their actions in an indirect way.

In his work, van Dijk (1998: 8) devotes a great deal of attention to ideology, which he considers to be an “interface between social structure and social cognition” and defines concisely as “the basis of the representations shared by members of a group”. According to him, ideologies allow people to organise the complex world of social beliefs in terms of what is good or bad, right or wrong, and to act according to these pre-established principles. Furthermore, the linguist claims that ideologies “influence what is accepted as true or false, especially when such beliefs are found to be relevant for the group”, they also “form the basis

of specific arguments for, and explanations of, specific social arrangements, or indeed influence a specific understanding of the world in general” (: 8). Ideologies are usually “self-serving and a function of the material and symbolic interests of the group” (: 8). Power over, or resistance against the domination of other groups may constitute the prime mover for the expansion of various ideologies which “operate both at the overall, global level of social structure, for instance as the socially shared mental 'monitor' of social competition, conflict, struggle and inequality, and at the local level of situated social practices in everyday life” (: 8). In this sense, ideology acts as a socially shared framework of beliefs whose primary function consists in organising and coordinating the commonly accepted interpretations and social practices enacted by groups and their individual members, and in establishing, enforcing and preserving power relations in particular.

Van Dijk (2000: 36) also claims that social power and control can be exercised through discourse and its properties (such as context, topic or style), since discourse itself is a form of action. In terms of cognitive approach, discourse may have an influence on how people interpret and define elements of social reality according to their mental models, or on how they represent the society in terms of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs or ideologies.

1.2.9 Critical Discourse Analysis

Much has already been mentioned in the previous subchapters about Critical Discourse Analysis, although it may not have been described under its name. Critical examination of any discourse involves investigation of the relations between language, or discourse, and social processes. It necessarily has an interdisciplinary character.

Critical Discourse Analysis involves both critical and constructive dimensions. In effect, as Lisowska-Magdziarz (2006: 23-24) argues, a researcher analysing discourse tries to reveal how it reflects unjust power relations and power abuse, manifestations of dominance and inequality, a hierarchy of values, legitimacy of aims, and knowledge and beliefs in a given community within which the discourse is realised. An attempt is made to reveal hidden intentions and assumptions, and often to expose what falsely seems obvious and natural. The main aims of Critical Discourse Analysis are, therefore, to demonstrate the intentionally constructed character of texts, and to investigate the tools used for manipulation and persuasion, as well as the possible social consequences which discourses may entail. It is crucial, then, to analyse discourse with reference to the socio-cultural, economic and/or political context in which the analysed texts happened to be produced.

Fowler (1991: 67) claims that critical linguistics, which is an approach rather earlier than Critical Discourse Analysis but manifesting a similar contribution and commitment to deciphering manipulative elements hidden in texts, “seeks, by studying the minute details of linguistic structure in the light of the social and historical situation of the text, to display to consciousness the patterns of belief and value which are encoded in the language – and which are the threshold of notice for anyone who accepts the discourse as 'natural'.”

Duszak and Fairclough (2008: 15) claim the definition of Critical Discourse Analysis and its usefulness as a methodological device as follows:

CDA is an analysis of social processes, mostly focusing on their semiotic dimensions – in other words, it is a semiotic “entry point” into social processes which are internally constituted as dialectical relationships between various social elements and moments, embracing discourse and non-discursive moments.¹³

Van Dijk (2003: 352) explains and describes Critical Discourse Analysis as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” To put it simply, Critical Discourse Analysis involves the study and the analysis of written and spoken texts with the intention to reveal the discursive sources of inequality, power and bias. The linguist also cites Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-280) who attempt to summarise the essence and main assumptions of Critical Discourse Analysis in several statements:

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action

In Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse is perceived as a specific reflection of the power relations within society. Its analysis aims at detecting societal problems and at exposing manipulation and discrimination. The term *critical* in this approach indicates that the analysis is not neutral. As Renkema (2004: 282) claims, such an investigation should confine itself neither to pure sociological study nor to pure linguistic analyses. In this critical approach, discourse is, in fact, considered as a form of social action or even a political act which may be subject to criticism. The approach also assumes the aim of reducing bias,

¹³ “KAD jest analizą procesów społecznych, skupiającą się głównie na ich wymiarach semiotycznych – innymi słowy, jest to semiotyczny „punkt wejścia” w procesy społeczne, które są wewnętrznie ukonstytuowane jako dialektyczne relacje między różnymi elementami i momentami społecznymi, obejmującymi dyskurs i momenty niedyskursywne.”; translation mine.

ideological prejudice and discrimination, and of empowering minorities or powerless social groups.

Fairclough (2013: 93) refers to Critical Discourse Analysis as discourse analysis whose aim is to

systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony [...].

According to Fairclough (: 93), therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis attempts to reveal the connections between discourse practices, social practices and social processes and structures, and to make them transparent.

According to Pennycook (1994: 121), among a number of models of and approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis there is a consensus which they all reach: “they share a commitment to going beyond linguistic description to attempt explanation, to showing how social inequalities are reflected and created in language, and to finding ways through their work to change the conditions of inequality that their work uncovers.”

Critical approach to a particular discourse aims at discovering its hidden assumptions, at displaying what is invisible at first sight, or perhaps at recognising a myth and revealing its intentions. It also attempts to initiate and provoke further discussion on a potentially significant issue.

Bearing in mind all the above-mentioned characteristics, assumptions and aims of Critical Discourse Analysis, it must be explicitly stated that the present dissertation adopts this critical perspective to examine the discourse of the beauty myth, to detect and expose the manifestations of the myth, and to refer to the discourse of the beauty myth with critical reservation.

1.2.10 Discourse and style

Style can be treated as one of the features of a given discourse. According to Lisowska-Magdziarz (2006: 74-76), in discourse analysis, the analysis of style, defined as a way of building and shaping an utterance, involving the choice of linguistic means serving particular communicative functions intended by a speaker, may outline to what extent it happens to be characteristic of an addresser, situation or context, for what purpose it is used, what functions it serves and what possible communicative and social consequences of adopting such stylistics in a particular discourse might be.

The choice of linguistic expressions, different lexical items that a speaker or writer decides to use, depends on a number of features, such as the type of discourse, genre, the group membership, social position or status of the speaker or writer, their age, gender, communicative competence, knowledge and level of education, opinions, system of values, or audience. As van Dijk (1997: 11) claims, “if such variation is a function of the context (speaker, perspective, audience, group, etc.) we usually call it a property of the style of the discourse.”

Van Dijk (1997: 11) concisely explains that “style is usually a context-bound variation of the expression level of discourse. The meanings in that case remain the same: if not, we would speak not of a stylistically variant discourse, but of a different discourse altogether.” Style can be formal or informal, depending on situational context. Spoken language tends to be less formal than written language.

Speakers adjust the style of their utterance to particular social contexts, to fit in and achieve a communicative goal by applying adequate or accepted stylistic features. As Bartmiński (2009: 33) attempts to show, a stylistic differentiation of language adopted and performed by individuals in various contexts can be treated as a manifestation of their socio-culturally constructed attitudes towards reality, on the assumption that the linguistic style is a means of communicating a set of values through language. This allows the explanation of a cognitive attitude in science, a contemplative one in religious settings, or a causative one in magic and propaganda.

According to Irvine (2001: 21), on the other hand, “‘style’ crucially concerns distinctiveness; though it may characterize an individual, it does so only within a social framework”. She attempts at describing linguistic style in terms of social distinctiveness and as an essentially sociolinguistic phenomenon: linguistic style is “a truly sociolinguistic phenomenon, an organization of distinctiveness that operates on a linguistic plane yet is constitutive of social distinctiveness as it does so” (: 21).

Sandig and Selting (1997: 138-156) insist on speaking of style in the plural. i.e. styles. According to the linguists,

styles are the socially interpreted and socially meaningful ways of using language variation as a resource in written and spoken interaction. It is language variation, typically in conventionalized co-occurring structures, which is interpreted in relation to speakers, text types, communication tasks, activity types, contexts, settings, etc. Typified styles have (proto-)typical features and structures but nevertheless they are dynamic and flexible enough to be adapted according to recipient design and situational or textual exigencies. (: 153)

According to Saldig and Selting (1997: 153), the choice of styles is not exclusively dependent upon extralinguistic factors. They can also be used as if unconventionally, in other

than typical contexts, with a particular intention or strategy lying behind such an action on the part of speakers/writers and recipients.

There seems to be a connection, therefore, between the social, style and the construction and mediation of meaning. Eckert (2001: 126) puts it in this way: “style is not just the product of the construction of social meaning, or even the locus of the construction of social meaning; it is what makes the negotiation of such meaning possible.”

To sum up, let us cite Rogers (2003: 31) who makes a general statement that “style is organised in a way that allows a space of looking closely at the relationships between the texts and social structures that play a role in social positioning, identity construction, and individual agency.”

1.2.11 Discourse, genre, register

The notions of genre and register again are somewhat troublesome. The reason for that might be the fact that different scholars tend to adopt only one in their studies, ignoring the other. This is at least what Biber, Connor and Upton (2007: 7-8) suggest. It does not mean that they use the terms interchangeably, however, although the theoretical distinction is sometimes not stated explicitly.¹⁴ The authors later come to the conclusion that when register is distinguished from genre, the first refers to “a general kind of language associated with a domain of use” and its analysis oscillates around lexis and grammatical features, explaining the systematic character of the relationship between these features and the situation of use; genre, on the other hand, refers to “a culturally recognized 'message type' with a conventional internal structure” and the analysis of genre concentrates on “the conventional discourse structure of texts or the expected socio-cultural actions of a discourse community” (: 8).

The above-mentioned definition of genre tallies with the concept of Santini, Mehler and Sharoff (2010: 4), who explain the importance of genre in terms of cognitive usefulness: genre “reduces the cognitive load by triggering expectations through a number of conventions.” According to the scholars, it is possible to view genres as “sets of conventions that transcend individual texts, and create frames of recognition governing document production, recognition and use” (: 4). Conventions are nothing else but regularities which influence the processing of information in a repeatable, predictive manner. The predictions

¹⁴ Biber, Connor and Upton (2007: 8) mention the scholars who exclusively use either the term *genre* or the term *register* in their studies and the lists are as follows: *genre* is exclusively used by Bhatia (2002), Samraj (2002), Buntun (2002), Love (2002) and Swales (2004), *register* is exclusively used by Ure (1982), Ferguson (1983), Hymes (1984), Heath and Langman (1994), Bruthiaux (1994; 1996), Conrad (2001) and Biber et. al. (1999).

concern the type of information a text contains and, therefore, allow the recognition of its communicative purposes as well as its context, which are essential in communicative interactions. “Genre is then an implicit way of providing background information and suggesting the cognitive requirements needed to understand a text” (: 4).

Wennerstrom (2003: 23) also notices the cognitive value of genres which “offer a systematic way of looking at the linguistic structure of various types of communication, provide a window for understanding and critiquing the cultural values of the community that produced them and show how specific goals can be appropriately achieved within that community.” She acknowledges that the conventionality of genres in terms of their linguistic and rhetorical features allows the exposure of the motivations and ideologies of the social community which generated them. As Shehzad (2005: 30-31) clarifies, genres, therefore, serve a preservative social function. On the other hand, they change together with the changing social societies and their values.

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 183) again admit that choosing a particular type of text is a process motivated by a number of factors. Among these is the configuration of text features which manifests itself in the structure of content and linguistic form, pragmatic criteria for using a specific text type as well as identifying it within specific functional styles. Thus, the criteria include the subject of discourse, its purpose and context. The text type should correlate with the situation in which it happens to be produced and with the effect it eventually exerts.

In her considerations on text types and typological analysis, Sandig (1972: 118) proposes a typological matrix reflecting the differences and similarities between different types of texts. She suggests a set of criteria that are intended to distinguish particular genres. The parameters include:

1. spoken text – material manifestation of a text
2. spontaneity – the mode of text production
3. monologue – the number of communication participants
4. the type of spatial contact between addresser and addressee
5. continuity of a message in time
6. characteristic linguistic forms of beginning a text
7. characteristic linguistic forms of ending a text
8. schematic character of text construction
9. specific subject matter of a text
10. utterance in the first person

11. utterance in the second person
12. utterance in the third person
13. redundancy
14. equal status of communication partners – relations between communication participants.

According to Duszak (1998: 201-206), the main objection to Sandig's model concerns the randomness of the criteria and the over-simplistic and vague treatment of the subject. Nevertheless, her attempt proves useful in genre analyses.

To return to definitional struggles, however, in general genre refers to a group, category or class of texts which share a set of features as far as content, form and style are concerned. The components make up a specific genre paradigm, and particular genres can be identified on the basis of those elements that occur within a text. Register, on the other hand, refers to a type of language or to the way of using it in the specific situation in which the communicative event takes place; the choice of register is also determined by a broader socio-cultural context.

Eggins and Martin (1997: 234) relate language to context in their register theory and explain that in the case of register “contextual dimensions can be seen to impact on language by making certain meanings, and their linguistic expressions, more likely than others. [...] context places certain meanings 'at risk'.” In order to clarify the concept of genre, the linguists refer to Bakhtin, whose work is believed to be a precursor of contemporary studies concerning the notion of genre. Bakhtin (1986: 60) defines “speech genres as 'relatively stable types' of interactive utterances”, the consequence of which definition is that the concept now includes both literary and everyday genres, both written and spoken, and not only texts traditionally defined as types of literary productions. Apart from this broadened scope, genres tend to be considered functionally, serving various social aims: “different genres are different ways of using language to achieve different culturally established tasks, and texts of different genres are texts which are achieving different purposes in the culture”, as Eggins and Martin (1997: 236) claim.

According to Swales (1990: 9), who presents his genre-based approach in discourse analysis, genres refer to the properties of discourse communities; the researcher explains them in terms of communicative events determined by different aspects, such as a text's function and its environment:

genres belong to discourse communities, not to individuals, other kinds of grouping or to wider speech communities. Genres themselves are classes of communicative events which typically possess features of stability, name recognition and so on. Genre-type communicative events (and

perhaps others) consist of texts themselves (spoken, written, or a combination) plus encoding and decoding procedures as moderated by genre-related aspects of text-role and text-environment.

Swales (1990: 9-10) suggests viewing the processing procedures as *tasks*. Individuals learn and acquire genre skill and the process hinges on former knowledge of the world, which initiates and develops the so called *content schemata*, and on knowledge of prior texts, which then increases *formal schemata* as well as an individual's experience with suitable tasks. Swales emphasises the significance of communicative purpose, since it constitutes a prior mover of any language activity in a discourse community. Moreover, as Swales claims, a communicative purpose happens to be “the prototypical criterion for genre identity” and functions as “the primary determinant of task” (: 10).

Finally, the exhaustive definition of genre that Swales (1990: 58) suggests is as follows:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community.

In his inquiry concerning the concept of genre and register, and the relationship between them, Swales (1990) quotes several linguistic approaches to the issue. Some are described below.

For Hymes (1974: 61), even though genres may coincide with speech events, they should be “treated as analytically independent of them.” This analytical separation of genre and speech event, however, does not convince Swales (1990: 39) or Preston (1989). The first linguist claims that this would not influence the typological categorisation anyway. The latter suggests separating genres and situations rather than genres and speech events.

Nevertheless, Hymes's concept of *communicative competence* and his SPEAKING schema for analysing the components of communicative events (presented below – *Table 1*) prove useful in socio-linguistic, and especially ethnographic, studies of context.

S	Setting Scene	Physical circumstances Subjective definition of an occasion
P	Participants	Speaker/sender/addressor Bearer/receiver/audience/addressee
E	Ends	Purposes and goals Outcomes
A	Act sequence	Message form and content
K	Key	Tone, manner
I	Instrumentalities	Channel (verbal, non-verbal, physical) Forms of speech drawn from community repertoire
N	Norms of interaction and interpretation	Specific properties attached to speaking Interpretation of norms within cultural belief system
G	Genre	Textual categories

Table 1 *Components of communicative events according to Hymes (1974)¹⁵*

According to Eggins and Martin (1997: 239), the grid suggested by Hymes (1974) includes a set of components enabling the observation of “the ways in which speakers make sense of what counts as a communicative event”, which is based upon the assumption that there is a “direct correlation between the functional organization of language and the organization of context.”

Saville-Troike (1982: 34) defines genres as types of communicative events, assuming their cultural and social foundations. According to her, types of communicative events create registers of genres that particular social communities use.

Although, as Ventola (1984) notices, the relationship between genre and register seems not to be clearly established, the concept of register is assumed to be a determinant of text structure (i.e. genre).

Gregory and Carroll (1978: 4), also cited by Swales (1990), view register as language variation of functional character. According to them, it refers to “a contextual category correlating groupings of linguistic features with recurrent situational features”. The choice of register depends on the configuration of three variables: *field*, *tenor* and *mode*, which, as Halliday (1978: 122) explains, “act collectively as determinants of the text through their specification of the register; at the same time they are systematically associated with the linguistic system through the functional components of the semantics.”

¹⁵ Hymes's SPEAKING grid has been adopted from Eggins, S., Martin, J. R. (1997: 240).

Egins and Martin (1997: 238) explain the idea behind Halliday's terms of field, tenor and mode as follows. *Field* refers to the social action, the nature of a type of activity in which the discourse takes place, the nature of what is actually happening; it indicates the linguistic situation the participants are involved in and is associated with the management of ideas and the content. *Tenor*, on the other hand, indicates the role structure, and concerns the nature, status and roles of participants in specific situations, their relationships and the management of those relations in which they happen to engage. Finally, *mode* refers to the symbolic organisation of the text itself, i.e. its structure, status, function in a given context and the channel of communication; it handles the function of language (what is meant to be achieved) and the participants' communicative expectations connected with language, and is associated with the management of discourse.

Martin (1985) makes a clear differentiation between the concepts of genre and register. According to the linguist, genres form the basis for the functioning of registers in a given culture. As Swales (1990: 40) further explains, registers are realised through language, while genres are realised through registers. In this sense, genres enforce certain limitations on possible register variables concerning field, tenor and mode that can be combined in a given society.

According to Couture (1986: 82), registers impose certain constraints at the level of vocabulary and syntax, whereas genres, additionally impose constraints at the level of discourse. Couture claims that “unlike register, genre can only be realized in completed texts or texts that can be projected as complete, for a genre does more than specify kinds of codes extant in a group of related texts; it specifies conditions for beginning, continuing and ending a text” (: 82). She, therefore, relates the concept of genre to whole texts. Registers, on the other hand, are considered to be abstract patterns existing independently of text-level structures.

Biber and Conrad (2003: 175) begin their considerations on register with the term's non-linguistic definition which they apply in their studies: they suggest this label for “any variety associated with a particular configuration of situational characteristics and purposes.” The linguists summarise a number of characteristics usually applied to identifying registers:

the participants, their relationships, and their attitudes toward the communication; the setting, including factors such as the extent to which time and place are shared by the participants, and the level of formality; the channel of communication; the production and processing circumstances (e.g. amount of time available); the purpose of the communication; and the topic or subject matter. (: 175)

As Biber and Conrad (2003: 175) later explain, specific registers may be differentiated by their “particular combination of values for each of these characteristics.”

Finally, and briefly at least, the Polish linguists presenting their stance on the matter of genre and register should be mentioned.

Let us begin with Duszak (1998: 218) who defines genres in terms of types of communicative events which are the outcome of different configurations of particular features of text and context. Genres occur in specific socio-cultural and historical circumstances and are primarily determined by communicative purpose which in turn may entail various linguistic constraints concerning content and form.

Rejter (2001: 359) suggests treating genre as a text pattern which may be modified, and whose use depends on a particular communicative situation.

According to Gajda (1990: 107-108), genre refers to a type of text that is historically shaped, and whose relatively stable structure is determined by the speech act features, such as the relationship between the speaker/writer and the receiver, the situation, the subject, and the function, form and matter of a text.

Wilkoń (2002: 198-200) enumerates the factors which enable differentiation between particular types of genres, and defines genres themselves as types of texts which are closely related, have the same or similar function, display the same or similar semantic and formal distribution of particular linguistic features and are determined by the culture and the pragmatic domain of a specific ethnic community.

According to Wilkoń (2001: 198-200), genre is to a great extent connected with the structure of text. This generic structure is multidimensional, and the features which allow to identify or recognise a particular genre are as follows:

- the linguistic and semantic function
- the connection with the situation and place in which a given text appears
- the compositional features of text, the structure of text
- evident properties of verse and composition
- repetitiveness and the spread of familiarity with a prototypical text of a genre
- the length of a text
- the stable character of generic features, which leads to their conventionalisation or grammaticalisation
- the possibility of creating different variants of a given genre

- the relationship with stylistic features
- the relationship with other genres (i.e. intergenerity)
- the relationship with culture
- the historical aspect which involves modifications or transformations.

Among the Polish linguists, Dobrzyńska (2003: 190) insists on formulating clear and adequate theories concerning genres and Wierzbicka (1983: 190) suggests moving from the concept of speech acts towards the concept of genres in linguistic methodologies. Both are cited by Mamet (2005: 82) who combines genre and discourse analyses in his studies. The linguist notices the most essential elements that seem to be the lowest common denominator in genre studies: (1) the function of a particular genre, (2) the broadly understood context that determines the use of specific language, and (3) the distinctive language features apparent at lexical, grammatical and structural levels, which are determined by function and context (: 84).

Żmigrodzka (1997: 23), on the other hand, finds Skwarczyńska's (1965) humanist theory concerning genres one of the most important conceptions in the field. Skwarczyńska (1965: 89) suggests and enumerates a set of features that determine genre structure. These are as follows:

- addresser
- addressee
- the relationship between the addresser and the addressee
- the sending situation, the receiving situation, the sending-receiving situation
- functions of the text
- subject of the text
- presentation of the subject
- matter of the text
- representation and expression
- code.¹⁶

Lastly, as Witosz (2004: 43) concludes having investigated a number of different approaches to text and genre, the essential issue upon which most scholars would agree is that genre constitutes a theoretical construct that is used for identification and differentiation of texts. As a model, genre is a representation of text. The model of genre is at the same time a

¹⁶ Listed after Żmigrodzka (1997: 23): „nadawca, odbiorca, stosunek łączący nadawcę z odbiorcą, sytuacja nadawcza, sytuacja odbiorcza, sytuacja nadawczo-odbiorcza, funkcja tekstu, przedmiot (temat) tekstu, ujęcie tematu, tworzywo tekstu, przedstawienie i wyraz, kod”; translation mine.

model of text. Therefore, as the scholar argues, no matter which dimension a researcher focuses on, discourse analyses must be integrated (: 46).

In conclusion, the concepts of discourse, genre, register, the relationship between them and their overlapping could be elaborated endlessly. It would not be possible to omit any of these concepts. The following study, however, gives priority to the investigation of discourse and myth, and the matter of genres and registers is of secondary importance. For the reasons of formal constraints, let the above summary constitute a sufficient theoretical foundation for the corpus-based research with horoscopes as specific genres playing the main part.

1.2.12 Communicative dimension of discourse

When it comes to communication, that is, in the most general terms, an exchange of information between the participants in a communicative event in the most general terms, elements of such an interpersonal communicative incident could be listed as follows: the participants themselves, the message, the channel, the context, the feedback. There is, however, much more to communication than that. To linguists, two matters seem of particular interest. First of all, what is actually being communicated and, secondly, how effective communication is achieved. Scientific disputes concern intentions, linguistic and non-linguistic communicative strategies, rhetoric and many more issues that for the reason of limitations cannot be described exhaustively here.

As Sperber and Wilson (1986: 2) claim, according to a recent model of communication called the *inferential model*, proposed by the philosophers Grice and Lewis among others, “communication is achieved by producing and interpreting evidence.” As an alternative, the linguists themselves formulate a semiotic theory of communication under the *code model* heading. In this latter model, communication is defined in terms of encoding and decoding messages. Additionally, Sperber and Wilson note that the two approaches can be successfully combined in the study of communication since they seem not to be incompatible and can both contribute to a communication analysis (: 2).

The above-mentioned code model suggested by Sperber and Wilson (1986: 4) can be illustrated as follows:

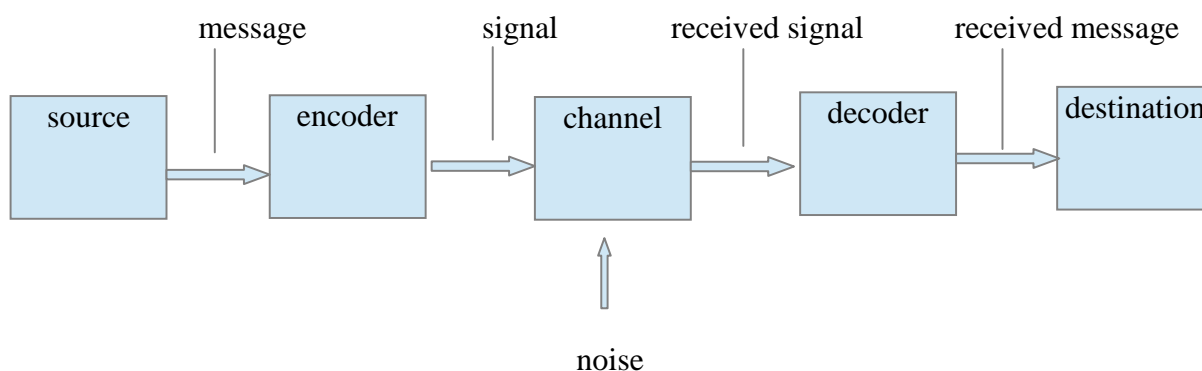


Figure 9 *The code model of communication by Sperber and Wilson (1986)*

The diagram shows how communication is achieved by means of a code, i.e. “a system which pairs messages with signals, enabling two information-processing devices (organisms or machines) to communicate”, as Sperber and Wilsons (1986: 3-4) define it. The process of communication starts with encoding a message into a signal (since the message itself cannot travel) and ends with decoding the signal at the destination end. On the way along the channel, noise can occur, which can disturb, distort or destroy the signal. The communication is considered successful if the codes at both ends are identical. Even though Sperber and Wilson mention verbal communication in their approach, the model may well be applied to the analysis of texts (: 3-4).

Renkema (1993) claims that the above-mentioned code model of communication can also be applied to written texts. As the scholar explains, the writer can be considered as the source of information. The message, which is encoded in words, is transmitted to the receiver (decoder) through the channel (such as paper or screen). The message is, then, decoded by the receiver. In this way, it reaches its destination, i.e. the reader’s mind.

As Saville-Troike (2003: 10) suggests, much of linguistic behaviour is governed by rules; this means that communication follows certain “regular patterns and constraints which can be formulated descriptively as rules”. These regularities of language use can be examined by different linguistic disciplines, including sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, pragmatics or semantics. The scholar also argues that “patterning occurs at all levels of communication: societal, group, and individual” (: 11). As far as the societal level is concerned, communication may pattern in terms of the function, different categories of talk as well as attitudes towards language and language users, and conceptions about them. At the group level, on the other hand, communication is determined by specific roles and groups within a given society. This communicative patterning depends on various features of social

organisation, and involves such factors as sex, age, social status, profession, educational level, place of residence (rural or urban), or geographic region. Finally, as Saville-Troike explains, at the individual level, the patterning of communication refers to “the level of expression and interpretation of personality” (: 12). The scientist emphasises, however, that all the above-mentioned levels of patterning are interrelated.

Last but not least perhaps, functions of communication should be paid some attention.

Jacobson (1987: 66) enumerates six factors involved in verbal communication and the many functions of language/communication they determine. The scheme he suggests is as follows:



Figure 2 Jacobson's model of communication (1987)

Within a certain *context*, the *addresser* sends a *message* to the *addressee*. The message obviously requires a *code* common to both the encoder and the decoder, and a *contact*, i.e. a physical channel or psychological connection that enables them to communicate. The functions that relate to the aspects of communication are as follows: *referential/denotative/cognitive* (focussing on what is being referred to, describing situations, objects, mental states), *emotive/expressive/affective* (concerning the attitude or internal state of the addresser), *conative* (engaging the addressee), *phatic* (focusing on maintaining the communication channel), *metalingual* (using language in order to describe itself), and *poetic* (focusing on the message for its own sake).

The scheme of functions corresponding to that of aspects of communication, suggested by Jacobson (1987: 71), is presented below:

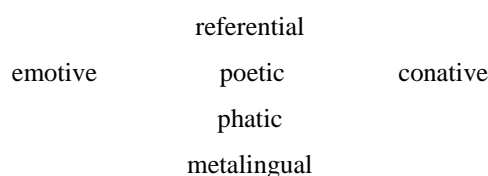


Figure 3 Functions of verbal communication as referred to the scheme of fundamental factors of communication, according to Jacobson (1987)

Similarly, according to Hymes (1961; 1972), in an interaction between individuals or groups, the communicative functions are determined by the needs and aims of its participants, and may be categorised as: *expressive* function (representing and conveying emotions and feelings), *directive* function (expressing requests and demands), *referential* function (referring to true or false propositional content), *poetic* function (referring to aesthetic qualities), *phatic* function (expressing empathy or solidarity), and *metalinguistic* function (referring to language itself).

Saville-Troike (2003: 12-13) shares this view claiming that “at the level of individuals and groups interacting with one another, the functions of communication are directly related to the participants’ purposes and needs”. Furthermore, the scholar argues that the functions are multiple at the societal level as well; for example, creating and reinforcing boundaries between people to unify those belonging to the same speech community and to exclude others, maintaining social identification, maintaining power relationships between groups, manipulating individual social relationships and networks, maintaining social categories and establishing divisions.

Effective communication and semantic and pragmatic aspects are inextricably linked with one another. Examination of all, or of at least some aspects, is inevitable in discourse analysis. Semantic and pragmatic matters, then, are discussed briefly below.

1.2.13 Semantic and pragmatic dimension of discourse

Matters connected with semantic and pragmatic aspects of discourse analysis could not be omitted in the following dissertation; however, the limitations imposed allow for only superficial review.

To begin with the difference between the two branches of linguistics, *semantics* refers to the study of the meaning of single words, expressions, phrases and sentences (semantic description includes, therefore, two levels – lexical and syntactic (Grzegorzczkova 2002: 37)), whereas *pragmatics* is the study of “intended speaker meaning” (Yule 1996: 127), or else “how utterances communicate meaning in context” (Trask and Stockwell 2007: 226), or to put it yet in a different way, “the study of the use of context to make inferences about meaning” (Fasold 1990: 119). As Winkler (2007: 152) explains, “whereas semantics focuses on the interpretation of utterances in relative isolation, pragmatics looks at the contexts in which meaning develops and the purposes for which utterances are used, that is, speaker intention and hearer range of interpretation.”

Meaning – this concept is troublesome, ambiguous and vague. Nevertheless, it is the concept on which the linguistic differentiation between semantics and pragmatics is based. As Winkler (2007: 133) explains, the point is that meaning has two aspects: “the construction of literal meaning” (subject to semantic analysis) and “the construction of meaning within a particular culture or social interactional context” (subject to pragmatic analysis). To provide an encyclopaedic explanation, let me cite Trask and Stockwell (2007: 227) who clarify the matter accessibly in the following way:

The first type of meaning is intrinsic to a linguistic expression containing it, and it cannot be separated from that expression. The study of this kind of meaning is the domain of semantics, as we now understand the term. But there is a second kind of meaning, one which is not intrinsic to the linguistic expression carrying it, but which rather results from the interaction of the linguistic expression with the context in which it is used. And to the study of this kind of meaning we give a new name: pragmatics.

In terms of discourse analysis, semantic analysis as the study of conventional meaning that is conveyed by means of words and sentences, may constitute a good starting point and a useful point of reference for the analyses at different linguistic levels. Such an analysis could, depending on the focus, include the study of different aspects of literal meaning of expressions, such as:

- (1) the internal semantic structure of individual linguistic expressions, as described by componential analysis, meaning postulates, or stereotypes [...];
- (2) the semantic relations between linguistic expressions as in synonymy, antonymy;
- (3) the whole meaning of sentences (sentence meaning, principle of compositionality) as the sum of the meaning of the individual lexemes as well as the grammatical relations between them;
- (4) the relation of linguistic expressions — or their meaning — to extralinguistic reality (referential semantics). (Trauth and Kazzazi 1996: 1048)

The knowledge of words embraces various aspects that can be subject to both diachronic and synchronic examination. As mentioned above, semantics deals with synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, stereotypes and prototypes, homophony, homonymy, polysemy, metonymy or collocation. It also should be associated with the so called *semantic decomposition* (i.e. examining meaning in terms of semantic features, such as +/-animate, +/-human or +/-male) or *semantic roles* (i.e., as Yule (1996: 116) puts it, analysing words in terms of “the 'roles' they fulfil within the situation described by a sentence”).

Thanks to pragmatic analysis – “the study of 'invisible' meaning”, as Yule (1996: 127) refers to it – it is possible to identify the shared assumptions, expectations and intentions that lie behind what is actually said. In this kind of analysis, context is of great importance. In order to understand what meaning is intended in a particular utterance, the influence of both the *linguistic context* (co-text) and *physical context* (particular place and time in which linguistic expressions are encountered) can be considered.

Consideration of context is inevitable especially in the case of deictic expressions, i.e. pointing through language. Deictic expressions are “interpreted in terms of what person, place or time the speaker has in mind” (Yule 1996: 130) and what person, location or time they indicate. As for terminology, these are *person deixis*, *place/spacial deixis* and *time/temporal deixis* respectively.

It is not that words refer to people, places or things; people do. According to Yule (1996: 130), *reference*, being another issue to be considered in pragmatics, is “an act by which a speaker (or writer) uses language to enable a listener (or reader) to identify something.” As the linguist explains, *anaphora*, on the other hand, is “subsequent reference to an already introduced entity” (: 131).

The above are closely connected to the concepts of *cohesion* and *coherence*. The first term refers to “the ties and connections which exist within texts” (Yule 1996: 140), whereas the latter one refers to the ability to interpret and make sense out of what information a text or an utterance contains.

When communicating messages, speakers tend to make assumptions about what the hearers already know. Though, obviously, mistakes are possible, such assumptions influence the use of language in many ways. “What a speaker assumes is true or is known by the hearer” (Yule 1996: 132) is how *presupposition* is defined.

Another issue related to the pragmatic study of discourse is *politeness*. This, on the other hand, is linked to the concept of *face*, i.e. “your public self-image” or else “the emotional and social sense of self that every person has and expects everyone else to recognize”, as Yule (1996: 134) clarifies the issue. In linguistic terms, therefore, “politeness is showing awareness of another person's face” (: 134). A *face-threatening act* is the one in which what a speaker says represents a threat to the hearer's self-image, whereas a *face-saving act* refers to the one in which what the speaker says lessens possible threats to the hearer's face. The theory of linguistic politeness assumes that everyone has a positive face and a negative face. As Yule explains,

your negative face is the need to be independent and to have freedom from imposition. Your positive face is your need to be connected, to belong, to be a member of the group. Thus, a face-saving act that emphasizes a person's negative face will show concern about imposition [...]. A face-saving act that emphasizes a person's positive face will show solidarity and draw attention to a common goal [...]. (: 134)

It must be mentioned, however, that politeness is a culturally determined phenomenon and the appropriateness in terms of linguistic politeness markers differs from culture to culture.

Pragmatic analysis proves useful to discourse studies since it allows the understanding of what people intend to mean by what they say. It is like interpreting intentions rather than words.

1.2.14 Cognitive dimension of discourse

According to Aronson, Wilson and Akert (2006: 69-70), in social psychology, social cognition refers to the way of thinking about oneself and the social world, including especially the ways of choosing, interpreting, remembering and using social information to formulate opinions and judgements or to make decisions, based on the assumption that people tend to create more or less accurate notions about the reality.

In order to function more effectively, or else more automatically and effortlessly, people make use of various cognitive structures and get involved in multiple cognitive processes. *Schemas* are mental structures of preconceived concepts and ideas that allow organisation of knowledge about the social world, and influence the way people perceive, process and remember information (Aronson, Wilson and Akert 2006: 69-70). Such organised patterns of thought or behaviour may involve categorising, generalising and overgeneralising, stereotyping or the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the study of discourse, the mental component proves worth examining. According to van Dijk (1997: 17), though cognitive aspects of communication described in terms of mental processes and representations are often the domain of cognitive psychology, in discourse studies, they allow understanding of how text and talk are produced and comprehended. This may manifest itself at both individual and social level. As the linguist claims, “in addition to individual cognition, discourse especially involves sociocultural cognition” (: 17). On the one hand, personal variation of mental processes and representations takes place, since individual language users tend to produce different discourses in specific communicative contexts, unique to themselves, even though based on the same knowledge. On the other hand, the socio-culturally shared repertoire of knowledge builds up social representations that social actors share, together with common values, social norms or rules of communication. The scholar also explains that “a cognitive discourse analysis emphasizes that [...] mental processes are constructive” (: 18) and context-sensitive.

According to van Dijk (1997: 18),

during understanding language users [...] gradually build not only a representation of the text and the context, but also representations – in so called mental *models* – of the events or actions the discourse is *about*. What we usually remember of text or talk, thus, is not so much their exact words, or even their meanings or actions, but rather such a model, that is a schematic

representation of our (subjective) beliefs about some event or situation. [...] And conversely, when we want to say something, a model will serve as the starting point for the production of discourse.

Duszak (1998: 249-250) defines cognition as a representation which people share within a particular social, ethnical or cultural community, and which may concern a situation, whole societal groups and people's conceptions of the social norms, values, ideologies, preferences or prejudices. The linguist notices the shift from the study of a purely linguistic matter towards mental processes. According to her, discourse analysis has gained a great deal by this: on the one hand, text meaning or semantic representation of text can be described; on the other hand, additionally, the meaning of a communicative event the text is about, i.e. a representation of a particular fragment of the metalinguistic reality the text refers to, can be examined.

Cognitive discourse analysis focuses on social and cultural determinants of creating and perceiving discourse. What is in the spotlight is the concept of social meanings with the accompanying assumption that *scripts* are not only individual-in-nature, but also socially-shared representations of the knowledge about stereotypes of social actions and social events. As Duszak (1998: 250) argues, social cognition is inextricably linked with the process of socialisation and inculturation, which makes it dependent on the social and cultural context. It may, among many others, include the broadly-understood semiotic system, the repertoire of communicative strategies, conceptual frames, the culturally-established collection of binary oppositions, stereotypical and prototypical images, the system of values, or the tortuous rules of rhetoric.

Considerations on the cognitive aspects of discourse have gained a great deal of attention in linguistic studies. Figures of speech, such as metaphor, metonymy or irony, conceptual frames, prototypes or linguistic stereotypes, or values in language are only some of the issues of interest. All of those cognitive-in-nature linguistic operations and concepts allow the realisation of how people perceive and describe the reality around them, how they get it in order, and how they organise and assess the elements of the social world. Language reflects and constructs the system of values, it allows the ascribing of values to people, things, ideas or events and provides a number of possibilities for directing, controlling or manipulating the interests, emotions, behaviour or attitudes of a given discourse community. The phenomenon of conceptual framing, greatly dependent on language, helps in thinking about, interpreting and defining people, things, or events. Conceptual frames are relatively stable cognitive constructs. However, though unlikely to change under the influence of a single action, they can be successfully used in order to sway a line of thought and conduct. As Kövecses (2011)

concludes, if skilfully carried out, linguistic actions initiating intended connotations and stereotypes may effectively lead to the interpretation desired.

1.2.15 Axiological dimension of discourse

In discourse studies, values may play the leading role when they are to serve as a tool of expressing judgement concerning various elements of the metalinguistic reality or of particular utterances and texts. Czajka (2011: 9) cites some of the linguists who believe this is the main connection between language and values: Zgółka (1988) claims that language can be viewed as an evaluative tool and values are always present when speech or text is assessed in terms of truthfulness, appropriateness or beauty; Pawelec (1991) shares Zgółka's view; Puzynina (1982) ascribes the axiological dimension of words to their meaning. Czajka himself, on the other hand, prefers a different approach. He attempts to formulate a theory in which values become a part of intentional actions aiming at fulfilling subjective needs (: 10). To do this, he benefits from Morris's (1964) theory of values and selected concepts taken from humanistic psychology.

Morris (1964: 17) perceives axiology as “the study of preferential behaviour” towards an object or situation. This can be either positive or negative. In Morris's approach, an organism displays positive preferential behaviour towards an object or situation when it acts “so as to maintain the presence of this object or situation, or to construct this object or situation if it is not present” (: 17). On the other hand, when an organism “seeks to move away from this object or situation, or to destroy or prevent the occurrence of this object or situation” (: 17), negative preferential behaviour is displayed.

Morris's model assumes classifying values into *operative*, *conceived* and *object* ones. Though Czajka (2004: 38) to some extent modifies Morris's definitions for his own use, he explains, frequently availing himself of Morris's own words, that

Operative value is “the direction of preferential behaviour of a given individual in a variety of situations” (Morris 1964: 19). [...] Next, preferential behaviour, be it negative or positive, “may be accorded to a signified object or situation” which “need not be present and need not even exist”. In this case, Morris speaks of *conceived values* [...]. Finally, the object value is presented by Morris (1964: 20) as a property “of an object considered in relation to its ability to reinforce preferential behaviour directed toward it by some organisms”.

Puzynina (1992: 12), one of the most influential Polish axiologists, constructs her theory on the basis of a few assumptions. One of the crucial concepts that she uses is the one of *value connotations* (*konotacje wartościujące*) referring to non-conventionalised or not entirely conventionalised elements of ascribing values to the pragmatic meaning of words.

Combining the Gricean concept of conversational implicatures with the basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics, which inextricably links language with human cognitive apparatus as well as changes and rules of establishing and making hierarchies of concepts, she suggests her own typology of values.¹⁷

Puzynina (1992: 39-43) differentiates between *positive values* and *negative values*, including both *instrumental* and *ultimate*. She describes the instrumental values in terms of usefulness, claiming that they are expressed with lexemes suggesting a functional or practical value. The ultimate values include *transcendental/metaphysical*, *cognitive*, *aesthetic*, *moral*, *customary*, *vital*, *sensual* (including *hedonistic*), both in the positive and negative values category. The linguist emphasizes, however, that particular values are arranged in hierarchies which differ among different people, tend to change with the passage of time and are to a large extent socially and culturally standardised. She mentions the problem of hierarchies declared and actually acknowledged. She also notices the importance of situational context and its possible influence on modifying the values once accepted or realised.

According to Puzynina (1991: 130-132), values can be described in terms of their quantitative as well as qualitative meaning. She proposes the following understanding of the statement *X is a value*: *X is what (people in general, a group of people and) the addresser believes (believe to be good and) acknowledges (acknowledge) to be good*. Simultaneously, the linguist assumes that the statement *X is good* means only as much as *X is what (people in general, a particular group of people and) the addresser wants (want) X to be*.

Puzynina's (1991; 1992) work is particularly important to the present dissertation. Her theory is adopted in the research part.

Another Polish linguist, Laskowska (1992), suggests describing values in terms of the means of expressing them. According to her, there are three options, i.e. *lexical*, *non-lexical* and *textual* means of expressing values.

Krzeszowski (1997: 230-232) attempts to describe the axiological structure of discourses in terms of *axiological balance* and *axiological clashes* that may occur at different levels of their structure. The basis for his conception consists in the assumption that words and linguistic symbolic expressions can be assessed on an axiological scale. Additionally, even though some linguistic expressions may seem axiologically neutral, Krzeszowski (1992: 536) reminds us that "they are still prone to axiological distinctions given appropriate context (accrued meanings, metaphorical extensions etc.)". According to the scholar,

¹⁷ For the reason of limitations, I would like to invite an inquisitive reader to find out more on different typologies of values in philosophy and humanistic studies in Puzynina (1992).

the axiological balance [...] of a discourse consists in maintaining a consistent positive axiological load of all the linguistic forms (symbolic units) at the semantic pole of every unit. This is connected with the fact that every discourse is ideally oriented towards a goal (realized through various literary and rhetorical means) which is of necessity positive (relative to some specific hierarchy of values subscribed to by the speaker or writer). Everything which interferes with reaching that goal must be evaluated as negative and provides experiential foundations for an axiological clash [...]. Every incident of this sort is also connected with the loss of balance and is consistently evaluated as negative. (: 536)

The axiological dimension of discourse, of its analysis in particular, may allow the observation or at least the supposition of the intentions behind its content and structure. Values in general, however exploited in any way or classified in any typologies, may contribute to the structure of discourse as well as its perlocutionary force.

1.3 Horoscope as a genre of media discourse

Since a compilation of horoscopes is to serve as a sample to be analysed in the following dissertation, some attention must be paid to this particular genre to provide theoretical background for the research. In the following subchapter, therefore, the focus is on horoscope as a specific genre of media discourse, on typically horoscopolical characteristics in terms of form and content, and on the language of success as a generic feature of horoscopes viewed as a consumer discourse representation.

1.3.1 Horoscope as a genre and discourse representation

Once it is assumed that texts are not exclusively a result of individual expression, but are also a means of affecting the social reality, and that, following Bakhtin's (1986: 60-102) theory, genres are for text what grammar is for sentences, and that their internal structure, i.e. a compilation of obligatory generic features, depends on a number of factors¹⁸, such as, for instance, the communicative purpose or intention, the specificity of a situation and overall circumstances, the status of the interlocutors or the level of their familiarity etc., then the possibility of analysing a specific genre as a discourse representation, and the possibility of approaching the very discourse critically in accordance with the essential ideas of Critical Discourse Analysis, seem legitimate.

Drawing once again on Bakhtin's (and Medvedev's) (1985: 137) characterisation of genre as “an aggregate of the means for seeing and conceptualizing reality”, another

¹⁸ Bakhtin (1986: 87) claims as follows: “Genres correspond to typical situations of speech communication, typical themes, and, consequently, also to particular contacts between the *meanings* of words and actual concrete reality under certain typical circumstances.”

assumption can be made, namely, that horoscopes, as a specific discourse representation, may contribute to the decisions and actions that individuals take on a daily basis as well as to how they perceive both themselves and the reality around them.

This view inescapably brings persuasive and manipulative practices into mind. The concept of ideology, moreover, is only one step further, especially when it comes to the media discourse. Fairclough (1995: 47-48) confirms that apart from operating “as cultural commodities in a competitive market”, being a part of the business of entertainment and being “designed to keep people politically and socially informed”, and serving as “cultural artefacts in their own right, informed by particular aesthetics”, apart from all of that, “media texts do indeed function ideologically in social control and social reproduction” and, simultaneously, they are “caught up in – reflecting and contributing to – shifting cultural values and identities.”

A similar approach is adopted by Fehérváry (2007) who studied Hungarian astrology publications and horoscopes – often regarded as entertaining and, thus, harmless by definition – as a tool assisting post-socialist transformations. She tries to reveal the efficacious potential of horoscopes arguing that, first of all, “in their capacity as a form of divination, horoscopes were often used as tools for negotiating the uncertainties and demands of the post-socialist world. Second, in their capacity as a popular culture genre able to shape and constrain subjectivity, horoscopes are particularly effective in fulfilling demands for transformation of self and worldview” (: 563).

Fehérváry (2007: 561) makes the following observations which may prove significant to the present study as well: firstly, it turns out that “readers of horoscopes looked to the divinatory capacity of horoscopes to assist them in making decisions and navigating the uncertain context of the 1990s”; secondly, “as a genre able to shape and constrain subjectivity, horoscopes were instrumental in affecting transformations of normative character, moral codes and worldview from a localist, state-socialist cosmology to one more in accord with the demands (and enticements) of a global, neoliberal capitalist order.”

How does all this happen? Perhaps it is worth mentioning at this point Hodge and Kress's (1991) concept of *social semiotics* which may well explain the possible source of the problem. To give a hint, let us first establish what social semiotics deals with. According to Hodge and Kress, it “is primarily concerned with human semiosis¹⁹ as an inherently social phenomenon in its sources, functions, contexts and effects” as well as “with the social

¹⁹ According to Hodge and Kress (1991: 261), *semiosis* refers to “the processes and effects of the production and reproduction, reception and circulation of meaning in all forms, used by all kinds of agent of communication.”

meanings constructed through the full range of semiotic forms, through semiotic texts and semiotic practices, in all kinds of human society at all periods of human history” (: 261). The linguists' fundamental idea is that words, texts and the structure of language studied alone is not enough in the analysis of meaning systems. More emphasis should be put on social structures, social processes, messages and meaning conveyed not only through words, but also through “a multiplicity of visual, aural, behavioural and other codes” (: vii).

Hodge and Kress (1991: 6) find discourse to be “the site where social forms of organisation engage with systems of signs in the production of texts, thus reproducing or changing the sets of meanings and values which make up a culture.” Discourse in this sense, therefore, refers to a process of semiosis and not to its product, i.e. text. A *text*, in this view, is “a string of messages which is ascribed a semiotic unity” (: 263). *Messages*, on the other hand, are the smallest units of meaning which may have “an independent material existence” (: 262); they have their source and their goals, a specific social context and purpose to serve. Finally, *genres*, just like the category of text, “are socially ascribed classifications of semiotic form” (: 7). This is no more than a fragmentary depiction of the linguists' approach, but it provides a useful methodological tool for semiotic analysis.

Furthermore, an interesting point of their considerations that may well coincide with and contribute to the present dissertation is how Hodge and Kress (1991: 266) explain the process of establishing and maintaining power relations in the social structure:

Social relations in semiotic acts and in social formations are constituted by relations of power (order and subordination) and solidarity (cohesion and antagonism), with these dimensions typically both complementary and opposed. [...] Opposing groups in society express their social relations and negotiate their interests through motivated versions of social reality called *ideological schemas*. Since specific groups may attempt to both express and control conflict through semiotic activity, asserting power and creating solidarity, the ideological content of texts is typically characterized by contradiction and inconsistency, and the functional unit for analysis is not the ideological schema but the *ideological complex*, a set of different and contradictory ideological schemas which serve and express the interests of a single group.

It is evident, therefore, that in order to successfully read through the nuances of meaning and intentions behind it, any kind of code cannot be studied in isolation, but with an equal reference to other sign systems as socially constituted and treated as inevitably social practices. Intuitively, horoscopes as discourse representation together with the potential ascribed to them seem to fit the theory.

Having mentioned what discursive and persuasive power allegedly harmless horoscopes may manifest, it is now essential to have a closer look at the specificity of the genre itself. The main questions to be answered focus on the material of horoscopes at the

level of lexis and grammar, their generic structure, the themes that build horoscopolical content, and their specificity as a prophecy written in the language of success.

With the passing of time, the form of horoscopes has not undergone many significant transformations. However, what has certainly changed is their language and content, which reflect the changes in conventionalised social reality. According to Wolny-Peirs (2005: 177-178), the way of using language in terms of, say, giving advice or addressing the readers has changed to some extent. As for the horoscopolical content, to the topics that seem to have always been included belong the following: health, friends and family relations. More significant changes can be observed on the plane of career, entertainment and social life, due to the multiplicity of “modern” leisure activities, the more easy-going approach to eroticism and its more open discussion and the ramifications that follow the new economic system. This is confirmed by various research, e.g. Kolbuszowski (1974), and more recently Kossakowska-Jarosz (2001), Bobrowska (2001), Fehérváry (2007) or Miś (2011).

In astrology, the term *horoscope* refers to a chart or diagram that represents the positions of the celestial bodies and the zodiacal signs at a particular point of time, such as at birth. In common usage, on the other hand, it refers to an astrologer's interpretation of the calculations based on the celestial map. As Klein's (1966: 743) dictionary suggests, the etymology of the word indicates its Greek roots: *horoskopos*, which refers to “nativity, horoscope” or literally “watcher of the hour”, is a compound of *hora* (“hour”) and *scopos* (“watcher”). “Real” horoscopes are based on the calculations of the date of birth or an event, the precise hour, and the specific details about the place of birth (i.e. longitude and latitude). No scientific research has shown any support for the accuracy of horoscopes however, and astrology itself is considered a pseudo-science. Be that as it may, the horoscopes in the media, as created on a scale of mass production and mass reception, have nothing to do with astrology. Nonetheless, as Wolny-Peirs (2005: 179) notices, the popularity of horoscopes is considerable and enduring due to the phenomenon of individual reception of non-personal texts, which is characteristic of mass communication and mass culture as such.

Apart from their persuasive function, horoscopes also serve a compensatory one, as it were. After Ulkan and Pawłowski (1927), Wolny-Peirs (2005: 179-180) claims that entirely negative horoscopes do not exist in accord with traditional astrological ethics. Horoscopes may only include a word of caution, reprimand or consolation in its place. On many occasions, horoscopes persuade the reader to benefit from a little hedonism, showing a preferred reality in which small pleasures put aside real everyday problems.

According to Zaśko-Zielińska (1996: 139), a general analysis of vocabulary may disclose the generic affiliation and establish the stylistic rules by which a specific genre is governed. Horoscopic features manifest themselves through the use of function words, modality, thematic vocabulary and thematic fields corresponding to metaphors. According to the researcher, the content of horoscopes is the outcome of several factors, such as the individual expectations of the addressees, their overall knowledge of the world and the immediate context, i.e. the type of magazine or the place of publication (: 153). The interests and problems of the readers can easily be deduced on the basis of their everyday communication that we witness and in which we necessarily participate. Comparing Pisarkowa's (1978: 19) classification of eight categories of the themes that are characteristic for spoken texts with her own observations, Zaśko-Zielińska comes to the conclusion that most of these themes appear in horoscopes (: 153). These are as follows: home; work and profession; school and learning; leisure time, holiday and entertainment; and cultural activities. The topics that reoccur are love, friendship, family life, job, money and health. The repertoire of thematic content may, however, differ depending on the profile of a specific magazine.

Apart from the abovementioned classes of topics (home; work and profession; school and learning; leisure time, holiday and entertainment; and cultural activities), Pisarkowa (1979: 19) also enumerates three more: autobiography (including childhood, school or college days), services (such as trade, communications, health services, catering) and ideology (including moral-ethical issues, religious issues, political issues). These either do not occur, or are rare, presumably because of the specificity of horoscopes. Autobiographical data or issues concerning the past are particularly unlikely, since such information can easily be verified; services are seldom mentioned, but some health and body treatments in a form of advice or caution may well appear; ideology is hardly ever explicit, but some manifestations of particular approaches to life can be expressed within horoscopic content.

It is also useful to understand that in astrology the horoscopic contents are constructed with reference to the twelve houses of horoscope, each representing a specific area of life. According to Doktor (1987: 31), the general sets of meanings ascribed to particular astrological houses are as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 st house | physical constitution, temperament, built and appearance; |
| 2 nd house | ways of earning a living and their results; |
| 3 rd house | siblings, school environment and habits acquired in childhood; |

4 th house	parents and everything that is inherited from them (material and immaterial), apartment and any other fixed property;
5 th house	biological and psychical productivity, children, creativity, aspirations, initiatives, enterprise;
6 th house	health, illnesses, well-being, experiences connected with nursing and caretaking;
7 th house	marriage, partnership, friendship and other co-operative relationships;
8 th house	death, experiences and beliefs connected with death;
9 th house	travels and journeys – both mental and physical, broadening one's mind;
10 th house	social status, career, reputation;
11 th house	friends and acquaintances, masters;
12 th house	limitations, impediments and sacrifices whether made out of necessity or self-imposed.

The construction of horoscopes may vary and it depends on several factors. According to Kossakowska-Jarosz (2001: 23-28), how horoscopes are fictionalised is determined by the characterological features of particular zodiac types, so that the horoscopes include the ones (stereo)typically ascribed to the personality of people united under a specific zodiac sign. Frequency is also important. Whether horoscopes are daily, weekly, monthly or annual depends on a publishing cycle. This may determine their size, although most horoscopes are relatively short texts. In press, they are usually somewhere towards the end, often on the last page, and often meant for entertainment, as the company of crosswords or jokes would suggest. Their structure is sometimes divided thematically. The very language is simple. The model of communication assumes one addresser and a group of addressees. The addresser has to play the role of an expert, of the one who has the astrological knowledge. The addressees must not get the impression that the fortune-teller is not a specialist in the field – the easiest way to ensure this is to use pseudo-scientific language. Often, some details confirming the competences of the astrologer (whose name can also be mysterious and exotic enough to satisfy any doubters) are added beside the horoscope column. On the other hand, it is important to create the sense of intimacy and the feeling of being understood and treated individually, to suggest a specific connection with a reader. Nothing works better than an assurance of understanding and sympathy addressed to *you*. Obviously, horoscopes avoid speaking in concrete terms; they count on abstract notions and figurativeness. People's tendency to think in pictures justifies the use of symbols and stereotypical images.

To sum up, to a great extent, the specificity of horoscopes arises out of the functions they may serve as a discourse representation in a given social community. Their generic features allow for much flexibility as to form and content, though the latter is often limited to a set of categories which, on the other hand, depend on the general profile of a magazine and its readers. There is, however, nothing new on this. Horoscopes, as with any other discourse type, may be categorised “by situation, by function, by participants, by text, by substance, or by a combination of these factors” (Cook 1992: 4). In order to decipher the discourse they contribute to, it is essential to investigate “both text and context, including physical form” (: 5).

1.3.2 Horoscope and the language of success

The language of horoscopes is shaped in accordance with a specific linguistic-cultural code of success, whose core constitutes the broadly understood idea of success and happiness. Wolny-Peirs (2005: 8) claims that the language of success is the creation of the epoch in which success constitutes one of the most desirable values. It is powerful, it enchants with positive energy, novelty, modernity, precision and brevity. But, above all, the language of success is defined by a particular set of features.

Wolny-Peirs (2005: 11-17) proposes her own typology including five features of the language of success:

1. *the feature of immediateness and exceptionality*²⁰ (*cecha natychmiastowości i wyjątkowości*) – refers to the pace of message transfer in the first place, and the evocation in the reader of the sense of being *the* person, the special one, who, nonetheless, has to respond immediately; however, the requirement has nothing to do with compulsion, the message is constructed persuasively enough not to be rejected
2. *the feature of patternisation and logoisation* (*cecha szablonizacji i logoizacji*) – concerns the expressions intended to function as magic spells or ritual formulas so as to express a lot of content in an artfully condensed form to, yet again, meet a persuasive purpose; the linguistic constructions make people resistant to contradictions, formally sanctioned by the syntax of patternised expressions; contradiction is no longer a transgression against the rules of logic, but a tool of successful persuasion and discourse shaped in this way is resistant to any objections or refusals

²⁰ The translation of all the features is mine; their original names suggested by Wolny-Peirs (2005) are provided in parentheses.

3. *the feature of accelerated pulse (cecha przyspieszonego tętna)* – is characterised by the use of words increasing the expressiveness of a text by evoking positive feelings and emotions, by the creation of an atmosphere of omnipresent excitement, happiness or optimism; this is achieved thanks to vivid metaphors and vocabulary permeated with energy, an optimistic message and positive associations
4. *the feature of affinity (cecha bliskości)* – refers to the illusion of closeness that is created through arousing the undisturbed conviction that the message is meant precisely for you²¹
5. *the feature of technicisation and professionalisation (cecha technicyzacji i profesjonalizacji)* – is connected with the efforts undertaken to make a message appear more credible and trustworthy, which is achieved with the use of specific terminology or sophisticated structures; the vocabulary must show scientific potential and evoke positive associations, even if it only pretends to be scientific and specialist.

Manifestations of the language of success are typical for discourses of success and happiness as represented through various text genres in the contemporary culture of consumerism. It is especially the discourse of media and advertising that explores its persuasive merits.

1.3.3 *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes as consumer discourse representation

The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes constitute only a small sample of the contemporary media discourse – the discourse that has been dominated and governed by the structures and mechanisms of consumerism and commerce. Furthermore, media discourse, whose representation are the discussed *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, may work ideologically. Increasingly, the mass media are also considered as business which operates within a socio-political system. This allows an assumption that as part of media discourse, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes constitute a specific representation of a broadly understood consumer discourse.

As Fairclough (1995: 12) maintains, the media are shaped by the above-mentioned system and constantly contribute to the shaping of it in turn, which means that they both affect and are affected by power relations existing in the social system, such as relations of gender, social status, class or ethnicity, as well as the relations between particular groups and the mass of the population.

²¹ Bralczyk (2004: 19) confirms that such a conviction guarantees that the message is effective – using the second person singular is the simplest, the most natural and the most persuasive way of creating the impression of affinity, as well as the illusion of the atmosphere of youth, freedom and ease.

According to Fairclough (1995: 12), the ideological work of media discourse includes “particular ways of representing the world [...], particular constructions of social identities [...], and particular constructions of social relations.” The language of the horoscopes in question does, indeed, contribute to creating a specific image of women and their place in social reality. It also determines their social identity, which is going to be exposed in the research part of the work.

The mass media that are part of the above-mentioned mechanism include press, radio, television and computer networks, such as the Internet²², each of which has its specificity as a medium. The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes which are subject to the present research are a sample of the last category mentioned, i.e. the Internet. As Crystal (2001: 24) claims, “the Internet is an electronic, global, and interactive medium, and each of these properties has consequences for the kind of language found there.”

Although horoscopes primarily constitute a press genre, the ones compiled for the sake of the study come from the online version of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and, therefore, they may have secondarily acquired some features which their press equivalents may lack, such as a global scope, a larger audience which, additionally, has an opportunity to respond to or express their thoughts on horoscopolical messages thanks to the comments section, which in turn may be understood as a kind of interactiveness, and consequently an alternation of sender-receiver roles.²³ Some differences are reflected in the register used and the content. For instance, not only is the vocabulary connected with computers and the Internet incorporated in the horoscopolical texts, but the *Cosmopolitan* woman is also expected to create and care for her online profile.

No matter whether in their paper or online version, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes represent the discourse of a consumer magazine. *Cosmopolitan* is one without any doubt. The horoscopes contribute to the commercially motivated media discourse in which, as Matheson (2005: 59) argues, “all texts can be thought of as shaping the identity positions in terms of which they make sense, and commercial texts construct particularly institutionalized identities and relations, which may have little to do with the selves constructed by their participants in other aspects of their lives.” The researcher also claims that critics of women’s magazines have revealed that such magazines tend to “invite readers to take up identity positions which may change from page to page, and which often conflict [...]” (: 59). This may again be

²² As Grzenia (2008: 21-22) explains, the Internet is one of many computer networks and not the only one, even though it is the largest and has a global scope. It can also integrate all of the others. In this work, the Internet is referred to as one of the four mass media.

²³ These assumptions have been made on the basis of Grzenia’s (2008: 18-24) observations and conclusions.

considered as reflected in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes since, as the research part of the work will reveal, the horoscopolical messages pose dilemmas, create ambivalence and incorporate opposing ideas even within the lines of such short and concise texts as individual daily horoscopes.

In conclusion, although the horoscope is primarily a press genre, it has naturally been incorporated in cyberspace. In this Internet environment, the genre still preserves its generic conventions, but it simultaneously acquires new attributes which are a consequence of the specificity and the ubiquitous character of the Internet as a mass medium. Horoscopes may be considered as a media discourse representation and a representation of consumer discourse, since this is what they are part of.

1.4 Summary

Not only is discourse a multidimensional concept as such, but it can also be approached from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, discourse has an interdisciplinary status in discourse studies among the humanities.

In discourse analysis, there seem to be a number of key terms, even though different scholars may define them in various ways for the purpose of their studies.

First of all, there is a difference between the concept of *text* and *discourse*. While the first one refers to a written record of a certain piece of communication, the other one is considered in terms of a piece of communication in context. Text analysis focuses on the study of formal linguistic features – such as lexis or grammar with which the content of text is realised, cohesion, text structure, or generic properties – rather than functions that it may serve or the extralinguistic context that it has been created in. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, involves functional analysis. It takes into consideration the aims and functions that discourse is produced for and the context. Discourse analysts intend to reveal in what way particular linguistic elements enable language users to communicate in context and the purposes for specific language use.

The distinction between *spoken* and *written* mode of language is yet another issue reappearing in discourse studies. As Nunan (1993: 20) summarises, “both modes have evolved to serve different communication purposes, and these different purposes are reflected in the discourse itself.”

An overall text structure, its generic properties, and its lexical and grammatical features may reveal and reflect the communicative purposes for which a particular text has

been created. These specificities allow for differentiation between different genres, as serving different communicative purposes.

The genre that is investigated in this dissertation – horoscope – belongs to the category of texts whose form-and-content specificity allows for immediate recognition. Its communicative purposes might be varied, but what reveals a great deal about the status of the horoscope and its function in popular media and everyday life, is the context in which it appears. Though horoscopes tend to be treated as light entertainment, some researchers see a manipulative potential in horoscopolical texts.

The above example horoscope case proves once again that understanding discourse involves much more than just text analysis. It requires careful consideration of context, which, in turn, involves using background knowledge in order to decipher the functions of or intentions lying behind discourse in question.

Finally, discourse as such involves conveying and negotiating meanings, values, ideas and ideologies. Critical Discourse Analysis aspires to investigate discourse in a specific way, taking into consideration the social aspect of people's communicative functioning within particular social-cultural, political and economic contexts. Critical Discourse Analysis aims at revealing cause-and-effect relations between discourses and discursive practices, power relations and factors that help to maintain them intact, as well as processes marked ideologically, serving particular purposes.

In the present dissertation, the author applies the premises of Critical Discourse Analysis since her major aims include both the socio-linguistic study of the discourse of the beauty myth and the critical approach to it. The analysis of discourse itself is assumed to be the analysis of both text and context together. This is because the author believes that the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes is only a small sample of the discourse of the beauty myth, a sample which should not be studied in isolation, without any reference to the immediate context or to the context of contemporary culture of consumerism. The discourse of the beauty myth is believed to be represented and successfully reinforced by the *Cosmopolitan* ideology. And since the author considers it to be detrimental to women, the discourse of the beauty myth receives critical attention.

CHAPTER TWO

Myth – a discursive phenomenon

For myth to be explored in a linguistic dimension, it has to be assumed that human experience and performance is as though *narrated* by it, and the mythical content hides a specific intention which is realised through discourse in a particular discourse community.

This determines the purpose of the following chapter, i.e. depicting myth as a discursive phenomenon manifesting itself in language.

Myth is a phenomenon rooted in discourse. Enchanting the world manifests itself in language since myth is language. It draws extensively on archetypes, symbols, centuries-old tradition and cultural universals, values, commonly shared knowledge and experience and stereotypes. It plays with connotations and uses words as tools or magical spells. It twists and escapes blame. After all, nothing is its fault. Though this personification of myth might come in for harsh criticism for its far too vague and non-scientific character, let it be a starting point for investigating more sophisticated dimensions of the concept in scientific, and more precisely, in socio-linguistic terms.

2.1 Myth – etymology and popular definitions

As the *Online Etymology Dictionary* claims and *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (2006: 2085) confirms, just like the French *mythe*, the English noun *myth* in the narrative sense derives from the Greek word *muthos* meaning “speech, thought, story, myth, anything delivered by word of mouth” [WWW₃₃], whereas the sense of “untrue story, rumour” traces back to the 1840s. Interestingly enough, some sources, such as, for example, the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [WWW₃₄], mention among the meanings ascribed to the Greek *muthos* “word”, which idea returns later in the dissertation, together with Barthes's concept in which “myth is a type of speech”, or else “stolen language”. Stolen words perhaps?

Indeed, the meaning of myth has evolved and split with the passing of time, which should not surprise, considering the dynamic properties of languages in general, the influence of ever changing social reality and the overlapping of cultures. As Kalniuk (2011: 25)

concludes sadly, instead of myth in its anthropological, positive meaning as an actual way of expressing the deepest values, the contemporary understanding comes down to either mythisation, that is to the so called degraded myth, or it refers to its common understanding that treats myth as mystification, untruth, falsehood and deceit.

As commonly defined nowadays, the concept of myth is either related to a traditional, usually ancient story that explains the laws of nature or historical events, and treats of supernatural creatures, ancient heroes and gods (these are rightly associated with Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Chinese, or other mythologies and pieces of literature), or to an idea or view that is not true, though some people (or a group of people) believe it.

The above is confirmed in the popular dictionary definitions. For instance, *the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1969) claims the following: myth is in the first place understood as “a traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the world view of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society”, or “such stories considered as a group”; secondly, myth is defined as “a story, a theme, an object, or a character regarded as embodying an aspect of a culture”; thirdly, as “a fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms part of an ideology”; or fourthly, as “a fictitious story, person, or thing”. Online *Oxford Dictionaries* [WWW₂₆] formulate broadly similar definitions. Surprisingly, an international students edition of *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995: 939) provides the possible meanings in a reverse order, claiming that myth, first of all, refers to “an idea or story that many people believe, but which is not true”. Only secondarily is myth considered as “an ancient story, especially one invented in order to explain natural or historical events” or “this kind of ancient story in general”.

Let me at this point quickly excuse and explain why such popular dictionaries have been used in order to introduce the idea. The primary intention is to depict the specifically popular understanding of the term, which I believe is well reflected in such sources (including those widely available online) and which outlines, at least roughly, the framework of the concept itself, which eventually becomes a bone of contention, a matter of inquiries, dispute and investigations among representatives of scientific fields. The scientific approaches to myth appear in the next subchapters.

Indeed, in the contemporary culture, the notion of myth is not free from vagueness. Some consider this phenomenon in terms of the debasement of its original “pure” meaning. According to Kalniuk (2011: 25), “instead of myth in its anthropological, positive understanding as an actual way of expressing the most profound content, we are dealing with

lousy mythisation – a degraded myth or this common understanding of myth that makes us treat it as mystification, falsehood, deception.”²⁴

Nowicka (1984), on the other hand, claims that in the scientific understanding of myth there are two basic conceptions which are often confused or to a certain extent merged. One trend associates myth with a certain type of society – one that is primeval, archaic or preliterate. In another, myth is associated with universal forms of thinking manifesting themselves in simple and complex, ancient and contemporary societies.

Perhaps myth reveals its multiple facets, all of which may successfully support scientific research in the humanities. In purely linguistic terms, myth is neither good nor bad as a phenomenon. It is only the context and the analysis of sociological, cultural, historical, psychological or other dynamic-in-nature aspects that allow verification of its intentions, influences on social reality, possible or actual ramifications, and that make judgemental considerations legitimate. Therefore, approaching myth in terms of its discursive properties allows for a critical appraisal.

2.2 An overview of major theories of myth

The interest in myth dates back to antiquity and is widespread among various scientific disciplines.

According to Bidney (1969: 3), Greek philosophers – Plato and the sophists – were interested in the meaning and function of myths, especially in revealing how much rational truth and traditional religious beliefs they contain. The sophists tried to explain myths in terms of allegories of the laws of nature or an ageless moral code. Though it was criticised by Plato, the method found support among Neoplatonists, and later among Jewish and Christian commentators on the Old Testament. Epicureans, on the other hand, attempted to reveal the true intentions (to establish and strengthen the power and authority of the sovereign and priests) behind the traditional myths by explaining the natural course of historical events. Then, in the Hellenist epoch, the interest in myths moved from interpreting and rationalising towards creating mythical stories for their own sake (Stabryła 1992: 6).

According to Stabryła (1992: 6-7), in the Renaissance, myths viewed as allegories of moral values, expression of human passions, desires, aspirations or emotions and as a symbolic reflection of ideals were an inexhaustible source of inspiration for many artists and

²⁴ “Zamiast mitu w antropologicznym, pozytywnym rozumieniu jako faktycznego sposobu wyrażania treści najgłębszych, mamy do czynienia z nie najlepszą mityzacją – mitem zdegradowanym albo tym jego potocznym rozumieniem, które każe traktować go jako mistyfikację, nieprawdę, zwiedzenie.”; translation mine.

writers. Then, the Enlightenment again tried to discredit ancient myths as untrue stories based on superstitions, whose intention was to maintain power relations in a given society. Simultaneously, however, the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries gave rise to the so called *contrastive mythology* whose pioneers were Charles de Brosses, Christian Gottlieb Heyne, and later Friedrich Creuzer (focusing on symbolic interpretation of myths) and Karl Otfried Müller (whose assumption was that myths reflect reality and the image of the society they originated from).

Stabryła (1992: 6-7) claims that it was in the second half of the 19th century that the philological and linguistic school of mythology was initiated by its eminent representatives – Friedrich Max Müller and Adalbert Kuhn. The study of myth quickened its pace as ethnological and cultural research advanced. Mythology was now explained with reference to economic and social context, as a phenomenon strictly connected with religion and ritual.

According to Podbielski (1978), in the 20th century, mythography – the study of myths and rituals – spreads over four main scientific fields: psychology, sociology, phenomenology and structuralism.

Stabryła (1992: 8-9) quotes the most influential representatives of the four fields. Freud's psychological thought explains myth in terms of a phenomenon analogical to dream, and notices the sexual symbolism hidden in it. The analogy between myth and dream constitutes a significant basis to the theories of myth of other followers of psychoanalysis, such as Karl Abraham, Otto Rank and Erich Fromm. Karl Gustav Jung combined the analogy between myth and dream with the concepts of *collective unconscious* and *archetypes*. As Stabryła explains Jung's approach, archetypes understood as prototypes or pre-existent patterns of primeval existential experience or as typical ways of behaviour are manifested in various symbols and construct images combined in myths, which constitute the reflection of the archetypes hidden in the collective unconscious (: 8-9). Jung (1927: 39) himself clarifies that “the collective unconscious [...] appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious...”²⁵ For other psychology-oriented philologists and myth analysts – Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray and Francis Macdonald Cornford – myth was “the spoken correlative of the acted rite, the thing

²⁵ The fragment originally comes from Jung, C. G. (1927) *The Structure of the Psyche*., but the paper can also be found in a later publication by Adler, G., Hull, R. F. C. (eds. and trans.) (1970) *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 8: The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. Princeton University Press.

done” (Harrison 1912: 328) – they were the Cambridge ritualists. Samuel Henry Hooke (1958) also linked the origins of myths with rituals and their cultural determinants.

According to Stabryła (1992: 8-9), the sociological and anthropological approach is represented by Emil Durkheim, who treats myth as a part of religious system and claims that it functions analogically to rite; myths and rituals are a symbolic reflection of social structures and values. Bronisław Malinowski, on the other hand, assumes that myth has practical functions rather than symbolic or intellectual ones – it exists to satisfy religious and social needs.

Phenomenological theories view myth as a part of reality experienced by individuals and as a specific way of thinking. The significant representatives of this philosophical trend are, according to Stabryła (1992: 9), Lucien Lévi-Brühl and Ernst Cassirer. Furthermore, an influential voice belongs to Mircea Eliade – a Romanian historian of religion – who treats myth as a religious phenomenon, as a sacred story that constitutes a specific model for all human existence, experience and activity.

Finally, the structuralist perspective tries to show that mythical thinking manifests itself in the structure of myth. Thanks to the differentiation into *langue* and *parole*, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955 : 430) reveals the double structure of myth – historical and ahistorical. He assumes that “myth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units” (: 431). However, as Lévi-Strauss highlights, “if there is a meaning to be found in mythology, this cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of the myth, but only in the way those elements are combined” (: 431) – it is the structure of the constituent units of a myth (*mythemes*) and their mutual relations that allows to reveal its message.

The fundamental assumption that Lévi-Strauss (1955: 430) makes, however, is that “myth *is* language: to be known, myth has to be told; it is a part of human speech.” This makes a perfect conclusion to this theorising over myth and a perfect introduction to the socio-linguistic considerations on the subject in the subchapter concerning socio-linguistic approaches to myth yet to come.

2.2.1 Modern theories of myth and definition struggles

The phenomenon of myth can be approached from different angles mostly depending on scientific assumptions, research purposes and the school of thought represented by particular scholars.

Honko (1984: 46) compiles a list of twelve approaches and believes these can be subdivided into four main categories – these are historical, psychological, sociological and structural perspectives. Although the approaches may sometimes be in mutual opposition, Honko suggests the two facts accepted by most researchers in the field are that “these theories in fact overlap and complement each other to some extent” and that “myths are multidimensional: a myth can be approached from [...] ten different angles, some of which may have greater relevance than others depending on the nature of the material being studied and the questions posed” (: 46-47).

Honko's (1984: 47-48) typology is as follows:

1. Myth as source of cognitive categories
2. Myth as form of symbolic expression
3. Myth as projection of the subconscious
4. Myth as an integrating factor in man's adaptation to life
5. Myth as charter of behaviour
6. Myth as legitimation of social institutions
7. Myth as marker of social relevance
8. Myth as mirror of culture, social structure, etc.
9. Myth as result of historical situation
10. Myth as religious communication
11. Myth as religious genre
12. Myth as medium for structure

Honko (1984: 48) himself believes that the definition of myth, however multifaceted and complex the concept is as a phenomenon, should not be too narrowly or too widely drawn for the sake of any study. Honko's own definition is as follows:

Myth, a story of the gods, a religious account of the beginning of the world, the creation, fundamental events, the exemplary deeds of the gods as a result of which the world, nature and culture were created together with all the parts thereof and given their order, which still obtains. A myth expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms, it provides patterns of behaviour to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of ritual with its practical ends and establishes the sanctity of cult. The true milieu of myth is to be found in religious rites and ceremonial. The ritual acting out of myth implies the defence of the world order; by imitating sacred exemplars the world is prevented from being brought to chaos. The reenactment of a creative event, for example, the healing wrought by a god in the beginning of time, is the common aim of myth and ritual. In this way the event is transferred to the present and its result, i.e. the healing of a sick person, can be achieved once more here and now. In this way, too, the world order, which was created in the primeval era and which is reflected in myths, preserves its value as an exemplar and model for the people of today. The events recounted in myths have true validity for a religious person. (: 49)

The above definition is structured upon four criteria: form, content, function and context, as Honko (1984: 49-51) emphasizes. *Form* refers to “a *narrative* which provides a verbal account of what is known of sacred origins.” *Content*, although it varies greatly among myths, always includes “information about decisive, creative events in the beginning of time.” Another criterion – *function* – refers to the fact that myths act as models, as examples to follow. The *context* of myth, on the other hand, “is, in normal cases, *ritual*, a pattern of behaviour which has been sanctioned by usage.”

As Honko (1984: 51) sums up, “myth provides the ideological content for a sacred form of behaviour. Ritual brings the creative events of the beginning of time to life and enables them to be repeated here and now, in the present.” What was once possible in the past is enacted once more in the present reality.

Among a number of universalistic theories, as he calls them, Kirk (1984: 54) enumerates the following: the nineteenth-century nature-myth school (myths as allegories of natural processes), the school of Andrew Lang (myths as a fundamentally aetiological-in-nature phenomenon), Bronisław Malinowski (myth as a confirmation of social reality, facts and beliefs, a reflection of social values and a non-aetiological-in-nature phenomenon), Jane Harrison developing the theory of Robertson Smith and James George Frazer (myths as the result of the misunderstanding of rituals), Sigmund Freud (myths as reflections of unconscious desires and fears of various kind), Clyde Kluckhohn developing the theory of Sigmund Freud and Emile Durkheim (myths as a phenomenon similar to rituals as “adjustive responses” to anxiety), Carl Gustav Jung (myths as expressions of collective unconscious, determined by archetypes and symbols), Ernst Cassirer (myths as responses to certain aspects of reality), Alfred Radcliffe-Brown developing the theory of Bronisław Malinowski (myths as mechanisms of social order), Claude Lévi-Strauss (myths as a reproduction of common structures of mind and social reality), Mircea Eliade developing the theory of Bronisław Malinowski (myths as a means for a temporal reintroduction of the creative past), and Victor Witter Turner developing the theory of Emile Durkheim and Arnold van Gennep (myths as a way to achieve a liberating restructuring of normal life). The list is to prove how diverse the phenomenon is and to expose the looseness of the term. Kirk does not find the approaches wrong though: the quoted theories “may be substantially right for some classes of myths, while being misleading for others” (: 59).

Moreover, Kirk (1984: 56) tries simultaneously to find the common denominator, based on the assumption that “there must be some general and universal quality of myths [...] by virtue of which we assign them this generic name.” He suggests that the fundamental element of any definition of myth is that it is a tale, a story, traditional, but not necessarily sacred. In Kirk's opinion, the quality of “sacredness” has no advantages: “although many myths in many different cultures concern gods and other sacred beings, or the period of creation, not all do so in any essential way, and therefore it can be misleading to focus on this quality as primary” (: 57). Furthermore, as the researcher claims, “in order to become traditional and remain so, a tale must have an appeal that continues from generation to

generation” as well as it “may take on many different forms and functions” (: 57-58). To sum up, when it comes to analysing myths, flexibility is both necessary and to be recommended.

Another theory, on the other hand, views the concept of myth from a somewhat theological outlook and suggests four general approaches to defining myth. This is the idea of Rogerson (1984: 62-71), who examines the following four criteria: (1) *myth as lack of rationality* (man needs explanation and when scientific knowledge fails to explain phenomena, myth offers “a defective understanding of scientific causes”), (2) *myth as an aspect of creative imagination* (myths should be interpreted symbolically rather than considered as “inadequate science”; they express “the deepest creative potentialities of man” and “profound truths about human existence”, and constitute an inexhaustible source of inspiration), (3) *the social role of myth* (myths are “products of society, embodying common values and ideals, and expressing them in activities such as worship”), (4) *myth in relation to history* (no matter if unconscious or deliberate, the introduction of images and symbols to present history in a mythical way is legitimate when exposing “the divine purpose believed to be behind events”; myth may, therefore, “work in harmony with, and to the advantage of, history”).

To quote a Polish scholar, Erazm Kuźma (1986: 64) suggests his own typology of using the concept of myth in modern research. According to him, seven categories concerning different ways of application or functions of the term can be distinguished:

1. repetitiveness (the term myth refers to a stereotype, motif or theme)
2. genesis (myth anticipates text, it is processual and it may refer to a fictionalised metaphor or a symbol)
3. myth as prefiguration
4. myth as structure
5. myth as social communication (connected with the role of the social masses is history)
6. myth as meaning (considered in terms of an interpretive category; the interpretation should be complete, correct, thorough, coherent and diversifying)
7. myth as value (as a negative value, myth refers to a fabrication, falsehood or lie, whereas as a positive value, it refers to strength, truth, sacredness).

Kuźma's (1986: 64) typology reflects how ambiguous the very concept of myth is and how multipurpose it might be in research practice.

Though the multiplicity of approaches to the concept of myth in general may create confusion, at the same time it provides a broad spectrum of ideas and methodological solutions for the analysis of myths. Defining myth is a risky task. The slipperiness of the term

and the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon (no matter if considered in terms of a specific genre, a sacred story or a deceit) seem to condemn any investigation in the field to criticism and only a limited success at best. Nevertheless, the issue is worth the challenge.

2.2.2 Myth in socio-linguistic theory – major approaches to the structure of myth

The collection of approaches quoted here is only fragmentary and extremely selective for the sake of limitations of scope. Some have already been mentioned briefly. They are, however, given more attention since they are significant and influential standpoints on the matter of myth and each explains, adds to or constitutes peculiar underpinnings of the approach and methodology assumed in the paper.

Moreover, it is important to mention that the subtitle might be a bit misleading – it suggests that mainly linguistic aspects of myth are to be in the spotlight here. However, discussion of psychological, sociological and cultural dimensions seems inevitable. Indeed, the essence of myth is shaped upon these elements (among many others) and is encoded in language.

According to the sociological school of thought, whose representatives are French researchers Emile Durkheim and Lucien Lévi-Bruhl, there is much more to a community of people than a simple group of individuals. According to Durkheim (1915), a human is both an individual and a social creature. As individuals, people perceive and experience objects empirically, but categories referring to general qualities of objects are the result of common thinking. Common ideas reconstruct and reflect social states and are their metaphor and their symbols. The latter two – metaphors and symbols – play a significant role in mythological thinking. According to the scholar, social life, in all its manifestations and at any given moment in history, is possible only due to elaborate symbolism.

Lévi-Bruhl's (1923) considerations on the specificity of primitive mentality also proved to be very influential in the development of the theory of myth. According to this scholar, when it comes to common ideas and conceptions, associations are governed by the law of participation rather than logical categories. In order to organise and manipulate the surrounding world, the primitive mind (mystical and pre-logical by nature) makes use of mystical participation. For Lévi-Bruhl, mystical elements are the most valuable ones in myths since it is thanks to them that the participation manifests itself. According to Mielecinski (1981: 60), Lévi-Bruhl persuades to regard the conceptions in which myth is considered to be

a means for explaining the world with mistrust. Simultaneously, following Malinowski's theories, Lévi-Bruhl treats myth as a way of maintaining solidarity with a social group.

Let us proceed to a representative of symbolic theory – Ernst Cassirer – who treats mythology equally with language and art, as an autonomous symbolic form of culture, marked with specific modality, and characterised by a specific way of symbolic objectivisation of what is perceived and of emotions. As Mielecinski (1981: 62) claims, for Cassirer, mythology constitutes a closed symbolic system whose coherence results from and is guaranteed by the nature of its functioning and the way of shaping the social reality.

According to Cassirer (1977: 79-80), in their social and cultural reality humans need to adapt the conditions of their life to their own environment. This adaptation is possible due to the acquisition of the *symbolic system*. Man lives as if in a new *dimension of reality*. The scholar claims that man does not live only in a physical universe, but also in a symbolic one, the fundamental aspects of which are language, myth, art and religion (: 79-80). These are, to use the scholar's metaphor, the varied threads that weave the symbolic net, i.e. the tangled web of human experience. Later in his considerations on various aspects and manifestations of culture, Cassirer summarises up that language, myth, art, religion and science constitute the elements and fundamental conditions of the higher form of society (: 403). As for myth itself, the researcher considers it to be closely related to language: language by nature is metaphorical; once it finds describing things directly impossible, it makes use of ambiguity and evasiveness (: 219). It is exactly this quality of language to which myth owes its existence.

Fromm (1957: 7) claims that myths are written in symbolic language, that is “a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world.” This language is governed by a different logic from the conventional one that people normally use in the daytime – “a logic in which not time and space are the ruling categories but intensity and association” (: 7). In order to understand the meaning of myths, one has to know the symbolic language. The philosopher emphasises, however, that though symbolic language is universal by nature, “some symbols differ in meaning according to the difference in their realistic significance in various cultures” (: 19). These “dialects of universal symbolic language,” as Fromm calls them, “are determined by those differences in natural conditions which cause certain symbols to have a different meaning in different regions of the earth” (: 19). As for the definition of myth itself that Fromm proposes, it goes as follows: “the myth [...] offers a story occurring in space and

time, a story which expresses, in symbolic language, religious and philosophical ideas, experiences of the soul in which the real significance of the myth lies” (: 195).

Taking the psychoanalytical school of thought into consideration, a brief mention of Freud's ideas cannot be omitted. For the father of psychoanalysis and the Freudians, as Mielecinski (1981: 77) claims, myths are a blatant expression of a significant psychological situation and a realisation of innate drives, especially sexual. For Freud (1919), the matter comes down to sexual-by-nature complexes removed to the unconscious, especially the Oedipus complex. According to Fromm (1957: 95), “Freud's interpretation of myths and fairy tales follows the same principle as his interpretation of dreams.” The symbolism found in myths reflects “a regression to earlier stages of human development where certain activities [...] were invested with sexual libido” (: 95). As the scholar claims, according to this theory, “in the myth this early and now repressed libidinous satisfaction is expressed in 'substitutive gratifications,' which make it possible for man to restrict the satisfaction of instinctive desires to the realm of fantasy” (: 93-94). In myths, primitive desires, instinctive drives and impulses are expressed in disguise rather than explicitly.

Although Jung (1990) bases his concepts upon Freud's ideas concerning the analogous character of dreams and myths in broad outline, he develops his own theory and introduces the concept of the so-called *collective unconscious* and *archetypes*. According to this psychoanalyst,

the collective unconscious is a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition. While the personal unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity. Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of complexes, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of archetypes. (: 42)

Archetypes, on the other hand, are symbolic forms, hardly tangible or definable, but referring rather to innate and unconscious modes of comprehending as well as behavioural patterns; as Mielecinski (1981: 82) explains, they are specific structures of primordial images of collective unconscious imagination as well as categories of symbolic thought, which organise the ideas and images coming from the outside. As Jung (1990: 42-43) himself claims,

the concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere. Mythological research calls them “motifs”; in the psychology of primitives they correspond to Levy-Bruhl's concept of “representations collectives,” and in the field of comparative religion they have been defined by Hubert and Mauss as “categories of the

imagination.” Adolf Bastian long ago called them “elementary” or primordial thoughts.” From these references it should be clear enough that my idea of the archetype – literally a pre-existent form – does not stand alone but is something that is recognized and named in other fields of knowledge.

Apparently, Jung (1990: 42-43) seems to treat archetypes in terms of elements of the psychic structure and compares them to motifs or images from myths or fairy tales. The scholar sums up his thesis as follows:

In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents. (: 43)

Jung (1990: 43), therefore, believed in the idea of the heredity mechanism of the transmission of archetypes and in the idea of permanence of archetypal images.

Campbell (1994; 1997) , somewhat influenced by the Jungian approach, claims that myths and rites may function either as a key to depicting certain universal elements in human nature or as a form of expressing a cultural and historical context. According to Campbell (1997: 280), an individual is of necessity only a particle and a distorted reflection of the whole image of the human. The entirety of the human is not included in particular community members, but in the community as a whole. Furthermore, mythology should not be considered in terms of what it is, but what function it serves, since it always yields to the desires and needs of individuals, societies and epochs. Campbell (1994: 49) notices various manifestations of myth in modern societies and emphasizes their omnipresence and power. For him, myths are metaphors of the spiritual powers of man. The mythologist claims that these powers which permeate human lives permeate the life of the universe as well.

Campbell's (1972: 8-13) general theory of myth is included in the following extended passage from one of his most influential publications:

Now the peoples of all the great civilizations everywhere have been prone to interpret their own symbolic figures literally [...]. However, today such claims can no longer be taken seriously by anyone [...]. And in this there is serious danger. For not only has it always been the way of multitudes to interpret their own symbols literally, but such literally read symbolic forms have always been -- and still are, in fact -- the supports of their civilizations, the supports of their moral orders, their cohesion, vitality, and creative powers. [...] With our old mythologically founded taboos unsettled by our own modern sciences, there is everywhere in the civilized world a rapidly rising incidence of vice and crime, mental disorders, suicides and dope addictions, shattered homes, impudent children, violence, murder, and despair. [...] Is the conscientious teacher [...] to be loyal first to the supporting myths of our civilization or to the "factualized" truths of his science? Are the two, on level, at odds? [...] We must now ask whether it is not possible to arrive *scientifically* at such an understanding of the life-supporting nature of myths that, in criticizing their archaic features, we do not misrepresent and disqualify their necessity [...]. Traditionally, [...] mythic beings and events are generally regarded and taught as facts [...]. When these stories are interpreted, though, not as reports of historic fact, but as merely imagined episodes projected onto history, [...] the import becomes obvious; namely, that although false and to be rejected as

accounts of physical history, such universally cherished figures of the mythic imagination must represent facts of the mind [...]. Myths, according to Freud's view, are of the psychological order of dream. Myths, so to say, are public dreams; dreams are private myths. Both, in his opinion, are symptomatic of repressions of infantile incest wishes [...]. And thus Freud, like Frazer, judged the worlds of myth, magic, and religion negatively, as errors to be refuted, surpassed, and supplanted finally by science. An altogether different approach is represented by Carl G. Jung, in whose view the imageries of mythology and religion serve positive, life-furthering ends. [...] They are telling us in picture language of powers of the psyche to be recognized and integrated in our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent that wisdom of the species by which man has weathered the millenniums. Thus they have not been, and can never be, displaced by the findings of science, which relate rather to the outside world than to the depths that we enter in sleep.

According to Campbell's (1972: 8-13) somewhat tortuous reasoning, then, modern society is in a state of confusion since life appears meaningless to modern man. People experience this meaninglessness because they are bereft of myths, since science has made the belief in myths at the literal level impossible. Yet the real meaning of myth is symbolic, not literal. This specific symbolic meaning is psychological, and, what is more, the particular psychological meaning is Jungian. Once deciphered in symbolic, psychological and Jungian manner, myth becomes compatible with science, which makes it acceptable to modern man to whom, once it has accepted, myth again gives meaning to life. This, in turn, brings the sense of confusion experienced in modern society to an end.²⁶

Another influential voice belongs to a Romanian philosopher and historian, Mircea Eliade. Even though the scholar makes it clear that the formulation of a definition of myth acceptable to all specialists and non-specialists, and covering all types and functions of myth in all kinds of societies, is barely feasible, and even though he admits that “myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various and complementary viewpoints” (Eliade 1963: 5), he attempts to define the phenomenon. Therefore, according to the philosopher,

myth narrates a sacred story; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the “beginnings.” [...] myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a “creation”; it relates how something was produced, began to *be*. Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the “beginnings.” Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness (or simply the “supernaturalness”) of their works. [...] myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the “supernatural”) into the World. It is this sudden breakthrough of the sacred that really *establishes* the World and makes it what it is today. Furthermore, it is as a result of the intervention of Supernatural Beings that man himself is what he is today, a mortal, sexed, and cultural being. (: 5-6)

²⁶ I would like to refer anyone interested to Segal (1984: 256-269) who attempts at deciphering Campbell's message in greater detail, for which I, unfortunately, lack space.

It is, therefore, clear that Eliade (1963: 2) considers myth in terms of a “living” phenomenon “in the sense that it supplies models for human behaviour and, by that very fact, gives meaning and value to life.” Myth has a specific structure and performs specific functions. According to the scholar, the structure of myth is built upon five characteristic features:

1. myth is a History of the acts of Supernatural Beings
2. the History is considered to be absolutely true and sacred
3. myth is always related to a “creation” (of patterns of behaviour, institutions, etc.) and, therefore, constitutes a source of paradigms for all significant human acts
4. knowing the myth means knowing the “origin” of things and enables the control and manipulation of them freely; this knowledge is by no means abstract, but is experienced ritually
5. in one way or another, individuals live the myth, i.e. they recollect or re-enact events (: 18-19).

Eliade (1984: 137-151) notices a direct and significant connection between myth and contemporary reality. According to the scholar, the sacred history that happens to be recorded in myths prescribes and directs the actions of everyday life:

this primordial, sacred history, brought together by the totality of significant myths, is fundamental because it explains, and by the same token justifies, the existence of the world, of man and of society. This is the reason that a mythology is considered at once a true history: it relates how things come into being, providing the exemplary model and also the justifications of man's activities. (: 141)

Eliade (1984: 141) views myth as a means for the representation of the sacred in earthly life, which concept seems to be strongly influenced by the myth-ritual theory and Jung's concept of allegedly universal archetypes.

Though some attempts at and signs of structural investigation of myths might be seen in the symbolic concepts of Cassirer or Jung, it is Lévi-Strauss who developed an influential theory of myth from a truly structuralist perspective. According to Mielecinski (1981: 96), Cassirer's notion of structure was rather static; the scholar did not realise the social nature of communication and the inextricable connection between social communication and the mythological language of symbols. Jung's analyses, on the other hand, were conducted on different planes – psychological in Jung's approach and logical in Lévi-Strauss's. “Mythology

is for Lévi-Strauss mainly a field of unconscious logic operations, a logic instrument of resolving contradictions”²⁷ (: 102).

In the translator's preface to one of Lévi-Strauss's (1972: ix) publications, Jacobson claims that “Lévi-Strauss is primarily concerned with universals, that is, basic social and mental processes of which cultural institutions are the concrete external projections or manifestations.” The anthropologist is more likely to investigate the relations between different phenomena and the systems the relations are involved in, rather than the characteristics of these phenomena themselves. This is how Claire Jacobson sums up Lévi-Strauss's approach to the procedure of a structural analysis in *Translator's Preface* to Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology*:

How does structural analysis proceed? The first step is the definition of the constituent units of an institution; these are conceptually equivalent to the phonemes or morphemes of a language and, therefore, comparable cross-culturally. Once the various aspects of culture have been reduced to their structural elements, relationships of opposition and correlation and permutation and transformation among these elements can be defined. Homologies between institutions within the same society or among various societies can be explained, not in terms of a mechanical causality, but rather in dialectical terms. Correspondences or isomorphisms should be sought, not between empirical data pertaining to different institutions, but between systematized forms, or models, which are abstracted on different levels and which can be compared either intra- or cross-culturally. To Lévi-Strauss, the building of such models is the basic aim of anthropology. (: x)

Lévi-Strauss (1972: 209) himself emphasizes the connection between myth and language – this has already been mentioned. According to him, myth, just like language, has

double structure, altogether historical and ahistorical, which explains how myth, while pertaining to the realm of *parole* and calling for an explanation as such, as well as to that of *langue* in which it is expressed, can also be an absolute entity on a third level which, though it remains linguistic by nature, is nevertheless distinct from the other two. (: 210)

Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss (1972: 210) claims that the substance of myth lies in the *story* that it tells, not in style or syntax, and amongst his considerations, he formulates the essential points of his working hypothesis, dividing it into assumptions and the consequences that follow them. The first assumption is that “if there is a meaning to be found in mythology, it cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into a composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined.” The second assumption says that “although myth belongs to the same category as language, being, as a matter of fact, only part of it, language in myth exhibits specific properties.” To quote the third assumption, “those properties are only to be found *above* the ordinary linguistic level, that is, they exhibit more complex features than those which are to be found in any other kind of linguistic expression.” Having established these three points, Lévi-Strauss deduces that, first of all, “myth, like the rest of

²⁷ “Mitologia jest dla Lévi-Straussa przede wszystkim polem nieświadomych operacji logicznych, logicznym instrumentem rozwiązywania sprzeczności.”; translation mine.

language, is made up of constituent units” and, secondly, “these constituent units presuppose the constituent units present in language when analysed on other levels – namely, phonemes, morphemes, and sememes – but they, nevertheless, differ from the latter in the same way as the latter differ among themselves” (: 210-211). Since the units mentioned belong to a more sophisticated order, the scholar suggests calling them *gross constituent units*, or else, *mythemes*. Mythemes, which necessarily consist of *relations*, should be looked for at the sentence level.

Since Lévi-Strauss (1972: 211-212) still finds the hypothesis unsatisfactory, he reformulates it, claiming that

the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations*, and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning. Relations pertaining to the same bundle may appear diachronically at remote intervals, but when we have succeeded in grouping them together we have recognized our myth according to a time referent of a new nature, corresponding to the prerequisite of the initial hypothesis, namely a two-dimensional time referent which is simultaneously diachronic and synchronic, and which accordingly integrates the characteristics of *langue* on the one hand, and those of *parole* on the other.

Myth, in this understanding, is an entity, diachronic and synchronic in its nature, consisting of mythemes which are bundles of relations that link myth to those two dimensions and which, as such specific bundles, reveal their meaningful nature.

Although Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theories undeniably make a considerable contribution to the study of myth and structuralist studies in general, it is Propp, in fact, who was a structuralist pioneer, with the difference that the latter used fairy tales as a substance for analyses. Since some researchers (e.g. Dundes, 1964; Mielecinski, 1981) aptly remark that myths and fairy tales are similar when it comes to their structure, it would be neglectful not to mention Propp's work.

To provide a little “proof” of the similarity of the two notions, let me cite Dundes (1984: 1). Comparing the terms *myth* and *folktale*, or rather their general definitions, he notices that what distinguishes one from the other is only the property of being sacred or not. Dundes claims that “a myth is a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form. [...] The critical adjective *sacred* distinguishes myth from other forms of narrative such as folktales, which are ordinarily secular and fictional” (: 1). Another “proof” is found even at the purely lexical, denotative level when the term *myth* is considered in its modern meaning as error or untruth: “in common parlance the term *myth* is often used as a mere synonym for error or fallacy” (: 1). Apparently, in an exclamation such as *That's just a myth!*, which may be a statement or an assertion of falsehood or untruth, the words *folklore* or *superstition* may well be successfully used in order to serve the same function.

To return to Propp (1976: 27), however, who believes that the term *morphology of the folktale* aptly explains his general attempt at the study of this genre: morphology is the study of form and structure as well as of specific structural features, and, according to the scholar, when it comes to folktales, a similar consideration of forms and structural regularities can be given with great accuracy. Based upon this assumption, Propp distinguishes thirty-one functions the characters may be involved in and seven general roles that they may adopt. He also mentions the so called initial situation which cannot be classified as function, but constitutes a significant morphological element of every tale (56-123).²⁸

What might prove more significant to the following dissertation is the comparison that Propp (2003: 19) makes in another publication – he juxtaposes the notion of fairy tale with the notion of myth. In his assumptions preceding the analysis of a number of stories, the researcher wonders if it is legitimate to consider myth as one possible root of fairy tales. For the sake of his study, the scholar defines myth as a story about gods and other divine creatures, in whose authenticity people believe, and emphasizes that myths and wonder tales can only be differentiated in terms of their social function, and not in terms of their form. Apparently, the social function of myth is not always the same, but depends on the stage of cultural development of a given social community. Myth cannot be distinguished from fairy tale formally since, in fact, they may both overlap each other to a great extent. Later in his considerations on the origins of fairy tales, Propp claims that myth, in the same fashion as rite, is the result of specific thinking which is by no means abstract, but manifests itself in everyday activities, different forms of social structure and its organisation, as well as in language, customs and folklore (: 24). Moreover, as the scholar assumes, myth is governed by specific semantics, even though it can only be historical semantics, never absolute or given once and for all.

In yet another publication, in trying to define the notion of fairy tale, Propp (2000) once again juxtaposes it with myth. Attempting to differentiate between fairy tales and other similar or related genres, the researcher initially cites myth. According to him, myth is an earlier phenomenon than fairy tales and, moreover, fairy tales have an entertainment significance, whereas myths have a sacred one (: 43-50). Propp once again emphasizes that the matter of form can never be decisive when distinguishing between the two. The true

²⁸ For more information concerning specific functions, see Propp, W. (1976) *Morfologia bajki*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza. Please, refer to the same source to find some more classifications and typologies of folktales – in his introductory chapters to the study of folktales, Propp enumerates several influential stances in the field; namely, the approaches of Miller, W. F., Wundt, W., Wolkow, R. M., Aarne, A., Wiesielowski, A. N. and Bedier, J., and comments on them critically.

difference lies in the matter of social function that myths and fairy tales happen to serve. Furthermore, a myth that has lost its social significance transforms into a fairy tale.²⁹ Myth is a story of religious nature, whereas fairy tales are aesthetic. Myth came into existence earlier than fairy tales and, therefore, the phenomena differ, not necessarily in terms of form and transfer, but certainly in terms of reception, which, in scientific study, should entail both the analysis of texts and motifs and their function is social reality (: 43-50).³⁰

Let us mention only briefly the work of Greimas (1983; 1987) who made attempts to construct a narrative grammar and who tried to synthesize Lévi-Strauss's and Propp's ideas, especially with reference to myth. He reduces the number of Propp's functions to twenty and demonstrates that each pair is not linked only by implication, but also by logical disjunction. Two pairs of functions are linked by means of positive and negative semantic correlation. A series of negative elements at the beginning of a myth or a fairy tale is supposed to change to a series of positive ones at the end. Moreover, this is achieved through trials. There are three general categories of functions but the main theme is divided into a positive part and a negative, which are in correlation with the initial and the final group respectively.³¹

Barthes (1991: 107) is yet another scholar who sees a close connection between myth and language: "myth is a type of speech." According to his view, myth as a concept falls under the science of semiology to the same extent as linguistics. As the linguist claims, "speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography³², cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech" (: 108). Myth cannot be defined by its object or material, since any object or material may be given an arbitrary meaning. What is more, mythical speech is made of a material that has already been processed in order to meet the needs of suitable communication. Barthes assumes, therefore, as follows: "we shall [...] take *language*,

²⁹ Here, Propp refers to and supports his considerations with Tronski, J. (1934) *Antyczny mif i współczesna bajka*. (In:) *Kniga C. Oldenburgu*. Leningrad; pp. 534.

³⁰ The study of fairy tales exceeds the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, there is only little attention paid to it here. It is worth mentioning, however, that on the Polish ground, the study of folktales has also been developing remarkably. If interested, refer to the multi-volume work of Krzyżanowski, J. (1947; 1962; 1963) entitled *Polska bajka ludowa w układzie systematycznym*. Please see *Bibliography* for a detailed bibliographical note.

³¹ Mielecinski (1981: 118-119) examines Greimas's ideas and, though he appreciates Greimas's works and scientific achievements, with his characteristic tact, he mentions the weak points of the theories. In fact, Mielecinski's (1981) publication is a compendium in which the author refers to the most prominent scholars in the field and provides critical remarks.

³² In his compilation of essays, Barthes (1977) analyses, among others, the press photograph as a message and the rhetoric of the image, for the discussion of which I lack space. In yet another book, Barthes (1999) continues his considerations on sign. However, they represent a different approach to the very nature of sign. It is also worth mentioning other Barthes's publications for further reference, such as *Od dzieła do tekstu* (1998) or *Przyjemność tekstu* (1997). For detailed bibliographical notes, see *Bibliography*.

discourse, speech, etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something” (: 109).

Basing upon de Saussure's conception of the internal structure of the linguistic sign, Barthes (1991: 245) formulates his own theory:

In myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern [...]: the signifier, the signified and the sign. But myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second. We must here recall that the materials of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.), however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth. Myth sees in them only the same raw material; their unity is that they all come down to the status of a mere language. Whether it deals with alphabetical or pictorial writing, myth wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a first semiological chain. And it is precisely this final term which will become the first term of the greater system which it builds and of which it is only a part. Everything happens as if myth shifted the formal system of the first significations sideways.

Barthes (1991: 113) metaphorically illustrates the above theory by means of a schematic representation of the pattern. Please consider *Figure 5*.

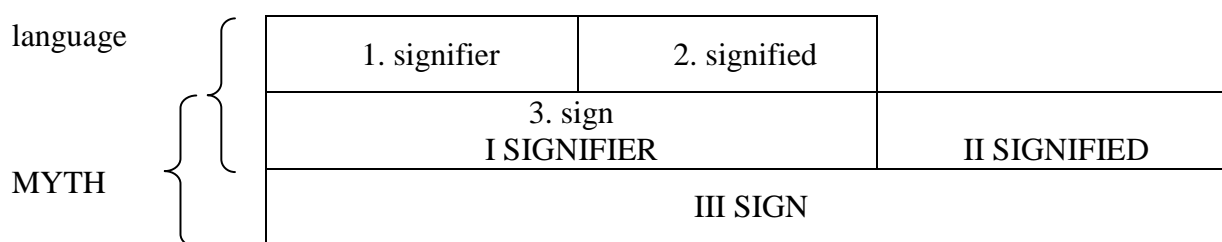


Figure 4 *Myth according to Roland Barthes (1991)*

There are two semiological systems in myth, one of which shifts in relation to the other so that the formal system of the first significations in the first system (at the level of language – a linguistic system, the language, *the language-object*³³) becomes a signifier in the second (at the level of myth – *metalanguage*³⁴).

In his considerations, Barthes (1991: 115) proposes using the following terminology:

the signifier can be looked at, in myth, from two points of view: as the final term of the linguistic system, or as the first term of the mythical system. We therefore need two names. On the plane of language, that is, as the final term of the first system, I shall call the signifier: *meaning* [...]; on the plane of myth, I shall call it: *form*. In the case of the signified, no ambiguity is possible: we shall retain the name *concept*. The third term is the correlation of the first two: in the linguistic system, it is the *sign*; but it is not possible to use this word again without ambiguity, since in myth (and this is the chief peculiarity of the latter), the signifier is already formed by the *signs* of the language. I

³³ This is the terminology that Barthes (1991: 114) uses: he finds the term *language-object* appropriate since it is the system of language that myth uses to create its own system.

³⁴ The second system is called *metalanguage* since this is a language in which one happens to speak about the first one.

shall call the third term of myth the *signification*. This word is here all the better justified since myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us.

Myth is, above all, defined by the specific relation between the meaning and the form. As Barthes (1991: 117) claims, the meaning is never completely erased or suppressed by the form, the form “only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal.” Even though the meaning loses its value, it keeps its life, from which the form benefits. This is because the meaning constitutes for the form “an instantaneous reserve of history [...], which it is possible to call and dismiss in a sort of rapid alternation: the form must constantly be able to be rooted again in the meaning and to get there what nature it needs for its nutriment; above all, it must be able to hide there” (: 117). The concept, on the other hand, is determined historically and intentionally. As the linguist explains, “the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations” (: 117). The concept has an open character, which means that “it is not at all an abstract, purified essence; it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function” (: 118). The concept hides the real intention of the myth and the repetition of the concept through various forms reveals its intention, in the same fashion as the persistence of certain behaviours reveals theirs.

Barthes (1991: 120-121) argues that the relation that links the concept to the meaning is the one of deformation – “*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear.” The concept alienates the meaning. This is what the semiotician emphasizes more than once: “myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion” (: 128). Myth is, therefore, neither an obvious lie nor a confirmation of truth. It escapes this dilemma thanks to *naturalizing* the concept. It turns out that myth transforms history into nature, so, eventually, “what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason” (: 128).

Furthermore, the process of naturalization is accompanied with that myth substituting a system of values with a system of facts. As Barthes (1991: 130) maintains, “any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system.”

Barthes (1991: 124) comes to the conclusion that myth is a type of speech that is stolen and then restored. However, the speech which is restored is no longer what was once stolen. At the linguistic level, the sign is arbitrary and unmotivated, whereas the mythical

signification is never arbitrary, always partly motivated, and unavoidably containing an analogy – “motivation is necessary to the very duplicity of myth: myth plays on the analogy between meaning and form, there is no myth without motivated form” (: 125). Barthes also suggests that in order to overcome myth, the best solution would be to mythify it with the use of an *artificial myth*: “all that is needed is to use it as the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of a second myth” (: 125).

Having investigated Barthes's theory, it can be observed how his concepts evolve. As Mielecinski (1981: 117) notices, at the beginning, myth for Barthes seems to be a tool of primeval picture thinking. Later, it becomes an instrument of political demagoguery which makes a particular ideology appear natural.

Other contemporary scholars who, like Barthes, investigate modern forms and types of myth and mythical thinking are, among many others, Dorfles (1973), MacLuhan (2002) and Morin (1965). Their research in the field focuses on contemporary myths and the mechanisms which bring them to life. The mechanisms are, according to them, fuelled by the present currents, trends and fashions in mass culture and the tremendous influence of mass media. Van Lier (1970), on the other hand, prophesies gradual vanishing of the role of myth and mythical thinking in future societies.

As Cook (1980: 1) points out, myth must be formulated and discussed in language. Though usually leaving the cognitive and scientific senses and the thirst for knowledge and reasonable explanation unsatisfied, “myth handles material that lies in some way out of the reach of natural language, with a technique that for Freud is an emotional dynamic and for Lévi-Strauss an intellectual dialectic” (: 1). According to Cook, myths may offer a way to handle the unknown, but they do not provide solutions, unlike science which “proceeds to name an unknown in order to solve it” (: 1).

Furthermore, Cook (1980: 2) assumes that

insofar as myth must be communicated in language, and insofar as myth – a particular myth, or “myth” in general – necessarily constitutes the central reference for statements of or about it, then myth is continuous with language. But myth, as that area which resists formulation, a permanent and powerful unknown, is also discontinuous from language, however much the principles ordering myths may be deduced to resemble the principles ordering a language.

Therefore, according to Cook's (1980: 3) theory of constant and necessary mediation between myth and language, the system of myth and the system of language are in an inseparable relation: “myth is not only analogous to language; it must inescapably enter language in order to be transmitted.” Finally, as the researcher claims, “language itself, seen just as a system of rules for producing syntax patterns, can be described as content-free; myth

never can [...]. Myth itself, once formulated within a society, is a given system, a sort of lexicon, where the relations between words are more fixed than in language” (: 3).

Nowicka (1984) defines myth as a narrative story that uses symbols and images and ignores the rules of formal logic. This story is absolutely real and literal for both the storytellers and the listeners. The nature of time and space is specific. Myth tells about subjectively and objectively significant issues for both individuals and communities, ignoring, however, the problems of other communities. The scholar claims that myth understood in this way, in its pure form, occurs in sacred communities, while in the culture of developed countries it occurs in certain analogical forms, such as ideology.

In conclusion, myth is necessarily interrelated with language as well as being a deeply socio-cultural phenomenon. These two aspects already signify and prove its discursive potential, which will be elaborated on later.

In response to the needs of the research, myth will be understood as a compilation of false assumptions and convictions which have been intentionally created to meet specific persuasive purposes mentioned later in the thesis. In order to explain the beauty myth phenomenon, Barthes's (1991) theory on myth as a type of speech defined by its intention rather than its literal sense will be adopted.

2.2.3 Functions of myth

The concept of the presence of myth, its survival, endurance and relevance in various spheres and aspects of social life over the course of centuries gives rise to a question about the usefulness and the multiple functions which individual myths and systems of myth undoubtedly serve.

According to Cook (1980: 1), “to organize all aspects of life, to explain the relation between this-worldly activities and other-worldly ones, to reassure himself on every front, man everywhere in the beginning had recourse almost exclusively to myths.” In the earliest societies, the whole complexity of reality seems to have come into place through myths. In contemporary societies, similarly, “the patterns derived from myths may be found to underlie our deepest personal histories and motivations, 'the unconscious'. Myths stubbornly pervade the way we treat one another and organize the space around us; they charge our works of art with urgent meaning” (: 1).

Nowicka (1984) mentions that myths treated as narrative stories explain ultimate issues, such as the essence of reality, the sense of life and death, the world order, the place of

humans in this world as well as in the social group they belong to, and the rules and patterns of behaviour accepted in the social community. It appears, therefore, that myths seem to serve as an explanation, a justification and a specific sacred sanction.

Myth is deeply social. It can establish hierarchies and value systems. By providing ideals and archetypes, it may contribute to shaping the reality. Myth may both “explain” the world and serve a pragmatic function aimed at maintaining the social and natural order. This is, however, achieved with the use of symbolic and metaphorical language. As Mielecinski (1981: 210) claims, the positive feedback between the two functions (explanatory and pragmatic) assures integrity and order.

The previously mentioned sociological school also views myth and rite as a symbolic reflection of social order and of the values a particular society lives by. According to Stabryła (1992: 8-9), the anthropological school, on the other hand, notices the practical functions which myths serve in primeval societies – fulfilling social and spiritual needs as well as confirming and motivating ritual ceremonies.

To support the latter approach, for instance, according to Malinowski (1954: 146), myth, as a statement of primeval reality which still lives in present-day life and as a justification by precedent, supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief. It is, therefore, neither a mere narrative, nor a form of science, nor a branch of art or history, nor an explanatory tale. It fulfils a function *sui generis* closely connected with the nature of tradition, and the continuity of culture, with the relation between age and youth, and with the human attitude towards the past. The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.

Malinowski's (1984: 199) conception is, therefore, in favour of the practical rather than the symbolic function of myth – the Polish anthropologist claims as follows:

studied alive, myth [...] is not symbolic but a direct expression of its subject-matter; it is not an explanation in satisfaction of a scientific interest, but a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom.

Łucieczko's (2010: 15) contemporary consideration on myth assumes the natural human ability of mythological thinking and, thus, creating myths, which ability is by no means exclusively reserved for the “uncivilised”, but is what every individual (including the modern, civilised, urbanite) is equipped with. From the author's sociological point of view, in contemporary consumerist urban societies, the functions of myth are similar to those it fulfils in primeval cultures. Namely, as Łucieczko emphasises, myth “creates and sustains the pattern of comprehending the world, explains its changeability, maintains the social order,

reinforces social values, integrates the groups that follow them, supports individuals emotionally as well as sanctions the privileges of certain social groups and spurs individuals and whole groups into action”³⁵ (: 15). The scholar also points out that myth may well be planned and produced intentionally. It is, then, aimed at the worldview of potential advocates. It becomes a tool for shaping, manipulating and forcing new, skilfully prepared meanings.

The latter function may involve certain danger. As Kołakowski (1972: 155-158) cautions, myth may escape control. Once planned and created, it may quickly start to live its own life due to potential but unpredicted interpretations. Due to the specificity of its nature, myth can hardly ever be programmed successfully.

Even the few examples above show how diversified the functions of myth might be and how their description is determined by the approach assumed by a particular school of thought. As Czeremski and Sadowski (2012: 55) aptly notice, the functions that myth serves depend on whatever conception of myth that a researcher applies in their analyses – one approach treats myth as a means of expressing the world view, characteristic for traditional societies; another assumes myth to be a universal form of consciousness manifesting itself in various societies and used to give form to any content. However, it has to be mentioned that the two trends are not mutually exclusive. Czeremski and Sadowski themselves assume a conciliation approach: “myth may function in cultures of various kind and may be a specific means of expressing any worldview content; this specificity, however, depends on the functions the myth served in traditional societies”³⁶ (: 55-56).

To sum up, the functions of myth are multiple and their description mostly depends on the scientific approach. Nonetheless, whether they are treated as a perfect cognitive tool ensuring evolutionary adaptation or as a perfect tool for manipulation, myths cannot be removed from social reality.

2.2.4 Myth in discourse

Myth *in* discourse or myth *as* discourse – that is the question. However, the dilemma is only superficial and seems of secondary importance to the subject matter. It may be assumed that

³⁵ “[dla człowieka “miejskiego” mit wciąż pełni podobne funkcje jak w kulturach pierwotnych:] tworzy i podtrzymuje wzorzec pojmowania świata, wyjaśnia jego zmienność, podtrzymuje ład społeczny, umacnia wartości społeczne, integruje wyznające go grupy, wspiera emocjonalnie jednostki, ale też sankcjonuje przywileje pewnych grup społecznych oraz popycha jednostki i całe grupy do działania.”; translation mine.

³⁶ “mit może funkcjonować w kulturach różnego rodzaju, będąc w nich specyficznym środkiem wyrazu dowolnych treści światopoglądowych, owa specyfika zależy jednak od funkcji, jakie mit pełnił w społecznościach tradycyjnych.”; translation mine.

myth as a phenomenon happening within discourse and using the same medium (language) is necessarily somehow merged with discourse.

Together with ritual and classification, Lincoln (1989: 3) considers myth as a specific mode of discourse. The author's assumptions can be encapsulated in the theory that the three modes “can be, and have been, employed as effective instruments not only for the replication of established social forms [...], but more broadly for the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of society itself.”

Perceiving myth as discourse can also be justified by other previously mentioned ideas. Panneerselvam (1999: 24), for instance, attempts to explain the concept of myth as discourse as reflected in the structural hermeneutics of Lévi-Strauss. The author tries to prove that in the structuralist theory of myth that Lévi-Strauss developed “there is a movement from text to context in order to make myth a discourse” (: 19). Referring to the structuralist's approach, Panneerselvam claims that “myth is not a mere study of the text, but text in context, informed by intention. [...] The context and the authorial intention which shapes the structure of the myth” (: 24) are, therefore, to be taken into consideration. A movement from text to context can always be observed which means that “a text has to be studied only in relation to the context. [...] The context is important not for explaining the text, but for our understanding of it. [...] it is not a mere explanation, but an understanding that is possible through the context” (: 24).

An inspiring consideration of myth and mythical thinking as inherently human and social (and which allows the assumption – also discursive, in the broad sense, that it contributes to shaping social reality) is presented by Mróz (1976). The scholar opts for treating myth and mythological thinking as the phenomena whose form has been modified, adjusted to the present times of technology, new systems of communication, economy or a specific world view, but whose existence is essential and inevitable, for it is an intrinsic and immanent quality of human psyche and a constant factor and condition of human existence. According to the researcher, mythical thinking and myth creation is dictated by the necessity to fulfil internal, psychological human needs (: 35). Myth organises the order of the world and the universe, and allows people to adopt a position. Myth is a manifestation of the biologically determined social nature of man and his need to unite. Mróz also claims that mythical thinking may well take an individualised form, based on the assumption that it is not the form or content that is significant, but the semantic meaning and function of a mythical message as a creation of the human psyche, a message influencing their own individualised

action as well as social. Myth, however, involves a group that begins to think and act accordingly (: 36).

The essence and power of myth and mythical thinking consists in its promise of an escape from the everyday materialised reality to the world of ideals, desired values and satisfied ambitions. In the search for what the myth has promised, people practise everyday rites. The means for realising myths depend on the level of technological advancement, social structure and mentality, but the mechanism is the same. In this respect, as Mróz (1976: 39) claims, tribal, religious, ideological or political myths do not differ from each other. What may differ is the greater individualisation of contemporary myths, i.e. manifestations of individual mythical thinking, individual interpretation and the experiencing of myths plays a more significant role. The dynamic development of mass media contributes to the evolution and restructuring of the hierarchy of values and needs, as individually and socially defined. Moreover, the connection between myth and culture is undeniable. As Mróz explains, “myth depends on culture and it does not exist beyond its realities and values, it is expressed in its categories, though its content is often commonly human”³⁷ (: 43).

Myth, therefore, manifests itself in various ways – linguistically, through individual and social practices and relations, structures and institutions, through mythical thinking and objects, through rituals, through the contribution that they make to the shaping of identity. Is it not discourse already? It seems to fit Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis's (2009: 3-4) approach to discourse which they define as “systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects.”

The discursivity of myth is dictated by its social and cultural dimension. No matter which approach is adopted (in fact, they do not exclude one another), myth inevitably manifests its discursive character in some way.

2.2.5 Politics of myth

The politics of myth is connected with the influencing of people at the social and individual level. The means might be of various kinds – either more or less direct, explicit or deliberate.

As Lincoln (1989: 3) claims, discourse always has something to do with force used by both individuals and groups of people within a particular society whenever “social borders, hierarchies, institutional formations, and habituated patterns of behaviour are both maintained

³⁷ “Mit uzależniony jest od kultury i nie istnieje poza jej realiami i wartościami, wyrażony jest w jej kategoriach, choć treści jego - są często powszechnie ludzkie.”; translation mine.

and modified.” In his opinion, discourse supplements force: any form of discourse may support the construction of power relations – ideological persuasion, verbal or non-verbal, symbolic or metaphorical. However, all the same forms of discourse that are used to mystify, construct and establish social order, legitimate rules, authorities or institutions may well be used by the subordinate to make attempts at demystifying, re-establishing and delegitimising the order, norms and institutions.

According to Lincoln's (1989: 5-6) observation, there seem to be two general modes of thought and discourse. The first one hides under the name of knowledge, science or consciousness. The opposite mode of thought and discourse “serves only to mystify and thereby perpetuate the socio-political status quo” (: 6). Different scholars, as Lincoln claims, locate this latter category in different phenomena: Barthes in myth, Bloch in ritual, Marx in ideology (: 6).

Myth, according to Barthes (1991: 142), “has the task of giving a historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal.” The researcher maintains that “myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact” (: 143).

According to Nowicka (1984), although the phenomena of myth and ideology are closely related and share certain common features, there are significant differences between the two. As for the similarities, both phenomena present a general view on the world to the receivers, and a particular system and hierarchy of values as well as a set of accepted and recommended actions. As a consequence, they organise the behaviour of individuals and communities. Both phenomena are compilations of ideas that influence emotions and intellect. Both engage images and symbols whose power consists in the identification of a series of associations. The differences between myth and ideology – Nowicka (1984) claims – are, however, serious. First and foremost, in a particular community, myth is absolutely binding, indisputable and true. As for ideology, there can be more than one functioning ideology in a given social community. Ideologies, then, may be of competitive and optional character.

Filipowicz (1988: 55) maintains, on the other hand, that myth may well contribute to the shaping of ideas, even those ostensibly representing a different order, even those whose literal sense has nothing to do with it. In this way, myth affects ideology. Ideas become similar to myth satisfying the same needs. This is, however, not the only problem. Filipowicz points out an open expansion of myth, the migration of motifs characteristic for myth and the

filtering of the motifs into the ground of ideology (: 55). Myth becomes a peculiar background for the concepts which are automatically associated with a contemplative human effort.

When it comes to politics and the establishment of power relations, ruling becomes a spectacle in which myth often happens to play the main part. As Filipowicz (1988: 216-224) claims, in politics, actual and objective truths are of no importance. It is myth which always prevails and triumphs over them. The spectacle of power is, however, an essential element of the social order infrastructure and a necessary condition of social self-organisation. The spectacle that the authorities impose on society enables the control of actions, teaches respect and induces society to accept, follow and adore them.

Myth is present whenever the needs that it most successfully fulfils appear. This is why its significant role in political actions cannot be overestimated. According to Filipowicz (1988: 7), myths may return in various ideological costumes, as if in disguise, they may loan their primeval wisdom and truths to political ideas or, finally, they may materialise in forms distant from their literal understanding as stories.

As Filipowicz (1988: 169) explains, myth is, indeed, a story. Nonetheless, it is a story that consists of many heterogeneous layers. It is not only words, but also gestures, masks, poses and figures, dress, sounds, colours and shapes; it is not only simple information, but also symbols whose fundamental property is ambiguity and hidden, metaphorical meaning. Since myth identifies the sacred, it creates rules and patterns of behaviour that do not allow any alternative solutions to dominate. In this latter case, myth manifests itself through ritual.

Ritual is the most characteristic manifestation of the presence of myth in social life. It proves the influence of myth and the effectiveness of the process of actualisation of the order it tries to impose. Furthermore, the language of myth makes use of symbols which establish a specific symbolic order, arrange values in a hierarchy and impart a sense of sanctity, depth and essence. Most importantly, however, symbols constitute one of the most fundamental elements of social bonds, assure the continuity and fluidity of social rules and events and, above all, codify the identity of a group (Filipowicz 1988: 169-171).

According to Burszta (2010: 20-22), today's cultures are identity cultures. People tend to appeal to particular elements of culture and their interpretations in order to self-identify themselves and make choices. This gives an individual the impression that they continually monitor their life and are consciously in favour of one variant of culture and not another. In fact, new myths or different reconstructions are being born.

Leszczyński (2010: 33) claims that contemporary myths want to be regarded as knowledge. Though such a claim has always been characteristic for myths, the point is that

nowadays myths present themselves as knowledge in the form of laws. The politics of myth consists in promoting and consolidating a practical purpose. Myth takes the form of a story or drama describing the fate of people and of the world, but its aim is to create a story that is vague enough to be used as a soothing interpretation of the ultimate. Paradoxically, as Leszczyński adds, the contemporary myths that seem to be constructed from rationalist and aprioristic perspective are more unrealistic than the primeval narrations, set in tradition and created in a chaotic way (: 45).

Majewski (2010: 49), on the other hand, tries to understand the mythological function of tabloid media. He bases his observations and conclusions on the following assumption: tabloid news is directed at emotions, at the unreasonable and irrational sphere rather than the rational one. Even if one piece of tabloid information aims at reason, it is always strongly tied to the emotional sphere. Tabloid media are based on sensationalism, personalisation, catastrophism, rapture, simplification, trivialisation, populism or flattering of the audience. According to Majewski, media communication is of a cultural-ritual character (: 54). In order to grasp its sense, it needs to be approached from the perspective of ritual and mythology³⁸. He supports his thesis with Carey's (1989: 43) idea that “the archetypal case of communication is ritual and mythology”, Rothenbuhler's (1998: 27) definition of ritual as “the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behaviour to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life”, and Eliade's (1994: 24, 27-28) conception that mythical images can be found everywhere in contemporary social reality and that the field in which people happen to participate in myths or exhibit camouflaged mythical behaviours is the omnipresent entertainment – the upheaval of media.

The conclusions that Majewski (2010: 59) draws come down to an optimistic suggestion that, from the cultural point of view, tabloid media considered in terms of rituals or mythological *mimesis* play an important therapeutic role in contemporary societies.

Apparently, contemporary people need, seek for and experience myths and their presence in their various manifestations; they need myths in order to make sense of their lives. At least, this is what May (1991: 15) has on his mind when he speaks of the cry for myth: “myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence.”

Another contemporary researcher – Pavločić (1979: 24) – also notices and defends the value of myth, claiming that myth constitutes “the greatest value of the present time”³⁹.

³⁸ Majewski (2010: 54) emphasizes that he understands myths as defined by their primeval and archaic dimension, not as a synonym of fairy tales or falsehood.

³⁹ “najwyższą wartością teraźniejszości [jest mit]”; translation mine.

In conclusion, whether a perfect tool for manipulation, or of an immense value, the phenomenon of myth seems to be an inexhaustible source of inquiries.

2.3 Summary

In the light of the above considerations of myth, mythical thinking and rituals, we still seem to be primitive, though we may claim to be highly civilised and thoroughly rational. The perception that modern societies have about themselves as ‘us – reasonable and rational’ as opposed to ‘them – primitive, mythical and magical’ has been shaped and consolidated with the development of modern information societies that convinced themselves of having a peculiar quality advantage over, and recognise an essential difference from, traditional cultures, in which myth, magic and ritual constitute a fundamental element of thinking about the world.

It turns out, however, that modern people live by amazing quantities of myths. Anything can be mythicized – a thing, a person, a phenomenon, an event. Anything, for myth knows no limits. And so modern myths are re-enacted over and over again in everyday individual activities and social practices in various actions of ritual nature, and reinforced in and by discourse. Everything hides a mythic potential and can be mythicised if it only yields to this process. Modern rationality seems to lose when confronted with popular culture which thrives on the processes of specific re-mythologisation of reality.

Myth steals what is valuable and distorts it so that it appears natural and justified while, in fact, it only pretends to be so. New, artificial meanings and senses may hide deceptive intentions. Myths themselves are not entirely bad, however. They may well serve noble intentions and may spread positive values and beautiful ideas. Myth is a powerful device. Deeply rooted in discourse, it may cause either great damage or great good to individuals. The problem is that in order to reveal its true intentions, myth has to be demythicised.

CHAPTER THREE

Woman-body-identity and the beauty myth – the linguistic-cultural image of a contemporary woman

Indeed, bodies matter a lot. And this is what the present chapter will explain. The socio-cultural context shapes the way women and men experience and perceive the body. This experience and perception influences identity construction. The linguistic-cultural image of femininity codified in language, and continuously re-enacted through discourse practices, is in mutual relation with the process of social construction of the body and the phenomenon of the government of the body. In the context of contemporary consumerist reality, the body appears to be a perfect tool in the hands of economy and politics. The deceptive discourse of the beauty myth is reaching its apogee.

3.1 Linguistic-cultural picture of the world

The assumptions of the linguistic-cultural picture of the world view language as a way of thinking and as a tool for interpreting reality. The present subchapter is only a brief review of selected definitions necessary to lay the foundations for explaining the linguistic-cultural image of a contemporary woman, which in turn may shed better light on the shaping of female identity and on the mechanism of the beauty myth in a modern capitalist society.

To begin with, the concept of the linguistic picture of the world has a long history. In his article, Anusiewicz (1990: 279-280) mentions some linguists who have contributed to this field of study. One of them is Herder (1877: 13) who views language as a form that shapes thoughts and actions, as a reservoir of thoughts which every nation owns, as a treasure trove of thoughts of a particular nation that has been filled throughout centuries.

Humboldt (1968: 27) develops Herder's idea and claims that language determines the boundaries and the outline of entire human cognition. The linguistic view of the world refers to the understanding and interpretation of the world, to a specific summary and compilation of everyday experiences, norms, values, conceptions and attitudes towards the material as well as spiritual and mental reality established or accepted in a given community.

According to Schaff (1967: 244), it is society that, together with language, transmits particular consolidated (again thanks to language) attitudes, assessments or stereotypical patterns of behaviour to an individual. These, in turn, influence consciousness all the more effectively because they are more difficult to decipher and, thus, are assumed to be and acquired as natural due to their prevalence and evocative style.

The categories according to which people tend to classify the reality around them serve as specific cognitive points of reference. As Ungerer and Schmid (1996: 19) claim, “cognitive categories [...] are stored in our mind as mental concepts and signalled by the words of a language.” The structure of categories, on the other hand, depends “on the context and [...] on our social and cultural knowledge, which is thought to be organised in cognitive and cultural models” (: 43).

As far as Polish representatives in the field of research on the linguistic picture of the world are concerned, Bartmiński (2006: 12), for example, defines the linguistic picture of the world as being included in language and variously verbalised interpretations of reality that can be presented as a compilation of judgements about the world. The judgements can be consolidated in language (grammar, vocabulary, proverbs, clichés) or they can be presupposed (in other words, the judgements may be implied through various linguistic forms that have been established and consolidated at the levels of social knowledge, beliefs, myths and rituals).

In a different source, Bartmiński (2009: 24-25) claims that even though it is possible to refer to pictures of the world as typical of particular styles, genres, or of an individual author's texts, the *linguistic* picture, seeming a common property, is the most important since it includes the value system of the whole language community. Language always carries stereotypical ideas concerning the world, but this creates a specific common way of thinking, perceiving and feeling, which in turn influences behaviour.

Grzegorzczkova (1990: 43) claims that the linguistic view of the world refers to a notional structure that has been consolidated in the system of a particular language (at the level of grammar and lexis), which is realised by means of texts/speech. According to the linguist, the components of the linguistic picture of the world encompass various phenomena, various elements of the world image, which manifest themselves in certain grammatical properties of language, properties of lexis constituting a specific classifying apparatus, properties of word formation, and semantic connotations that people associate with the phenomena they name. In short, the linguistic image of the world is a notional structure,

characteristic for each language, with the use of which people interpret and classify the reality around them (: 45-47).

Tokarski (2001: 366), on the other hand, refers to the linguistic image of the world as a set of regularities which govern grammar relationships (at the level of inflection, word formation or syntax) and semantic structures of lexis, and which show specific ways of viewing particular elements of the reality and the understanding of the world order, prevailing hierarchies and accepted values.

According to Maćkiewicz (1990: 210), in the first place, the linguistic re-enacting of reality involves the process of structuralisation of the world, which consists in isolating objects and phenomena that are of particular importance or interest to a given social community. Secondly, it is necessary to describe the objects and phenomena together with their characteristics to, finally, make it possible to put in order the described objects and phenomena and to assess them appropriately.

As for the study of the linguistic picture of the world, Hebrajska (2000: 73) enumerates several stages: (1) establishing which components of the reality are named (these are usually the ones that a given society finds useful); (2) formulating a semantic and cognitive definition of the distinguished component, as well as the definition of re-enacting the stereotype or prototype of this component; (3) categorising/classifying the components in question; and (4) classifying the values attributed to those components.

To sum up, the concept of the linguistic-cultural picture of the world yet again reveals the connection between language and its profound significance in the shaping of identity. A specific interpretation of reality, which is encoded and consolidated in language, affects the perception of the world at both individual and societal levels, and this, in turn, contributes to the shaping of identity, both individual and social. This is why the concept of the linguistic picture of the world is useful for the present dissertation. It allows the presentation and the explanation of these interpretations, and of their contribution to the shaping of *Cosmopolitan* identity. The deciphering of the linguistic-cultural image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman, which is encoded in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, enables to theorise about its reality-shaping significance and also to approach it critically.

3.2 Factors contributing to the shaping of the linguistic-cultural picture of a woman

The image of femaleness, of a woman and her position and roles in society and culture is shaped in the mind of people by both individual experience as well as centuries-old common experience consolidated by custom, religion, law and politics, literature or art. The common way of thinking about women is encoded in language, constantly modified and updated to the ever changing reality, expressed in generalised judgements which, more or less explicitly pronounced, attach positive or negative values to the overall image and behaviour of individual women and women in general.

According to Jędrzejko (1994: 160), there are several significant factors that have undoubtedly had an immense impact on the general image of a woman in the European culture. These are, above all, nature, a reservoir of ancient images, and Christianity. With the ability to give birth, nature “predestined” women to yielding to this fundamental role, which in turn with the passing of time subjected them to male dominance. This “natural” dependence has had further repercussions. Cultural consequences include the general conviction concerning the roles women should play in society. Customary consequences embrace norms, judgements and expectations which women should adjust to. Social ramifications include the position of women in family and society.

Another important factor, as Jędrzejko (1994: 162) claims, is the influence of the patriarchal culture of antiquity which has provided a palette of images of women as faithful wives and guardians of hearth and home, as women of loose morals, as strong and intelligent hetaeras, or as women whose complicated nature escapes reason and appears irrational.

The third factor that Jędrzejko (1994: 162) mentions is Christianity. According to the linguist, this influence has manifested itself in the creation of two contradictory patterns of female personality, which are based on the antinomy of good and bad, virtue and sin, corporeality and spirituality. The characteristic of Christianity attitude towards body, sexuality and eroticism as well as towards the institution of marriage has established the scope of duties and the hierarchy of virtues for women to follow.

There has been a great deal of research into the prototypical and stereotypical view of women. Gender studies have also made a significant contribution. As it turns out, factors such as politics, economy, capitalist philosophy, the advancement of technology, and the omnipresence of mass media play a huge role in establishing and maintaining the most “desirable” state of matters. Some of the studies will be mentioned in subsequent subchapters, although exhausting the issue by no means. At this point, however, I shall leave the problem

of the perception and treatment of women, as social creatures, to the reader's intuition. Hopefully, what follows will make the overall image of contemporary women more precise. The author suspects, however, that the term *precise* is not appropriate, taking into consideration the multi-dimensionality of the phenomenon as such.

3.3 Gender as a component of the world image and a discourse feature

Language makes reality – no doubt. It is, and has always been, the medium for constructing identity. And what significance does gender have as a factor that contributes to the shaping of the linguistic picture of the world, and to the shaping of identities as a consequence?

The feminist stance cannot be omitted here. At a political level, as Cameron (1992: 4) claims, “feminism is a movement for the full humanity of women.” Not equality or women's rights, for “equality presupposes a standard to which one is equal: in this case, the implied standard is men” (: 4). Feminism wishes more – according to the linguist, it is “the creation of a world in which one gender does not set the standard of human value” (: 4). As an intellectual approach, on the other hand, based upon the assumption that the relations between men and women are socially constructed rather than natural, feminism attempts to understand the relations and to find solutions to change them. This involves describing the conditions of women's lives and theorising, i.e. explaining the conditions. As Cameron tells us, feminist scholars have investigated a number of factors; for instance, the sexual division of labour (“Men's work is economically and socially valued; women's usually is not.”), women's obligations concerning domestic work and childcare (“mothering, apart from its role in restricting women economically, may have consequences for the psychology of women and their children, reproducing the cycle whereby women mother and men do not.”), the role of female sexuality (“Sexual violence against women is widely practised and frequently condoned; at the same time a double standard denies women full expression as active sexual beings themselves.”), or the impact of cultural representations of gender (women and men appearing in literature, pictures, mass media, textbooks, scholarly articles or elsewhere play a role “in forming the identities of real women and men, their notions of masculinity and femininity, their expectations of what is possible and their ideas of what is normal.”) (: 5).

The ways of portraying women in cultural products have been criticised by feminists. One of them, Millett (1988), strongly objects to how women are depicted in contemporary literary descriptions, making this a starting point for further considerations on the role that

concepts of domination and power relations play in such descriptions, and considerations on sexual politics in patriarchal cultures, proving that “sex is a status category with political implications” (: 32). In her theory, Millett discusses multiple aspects of, and manifestations of, sexual politics, including ideological, biological, sociological, class, economic and educational, force, anthropological (myth and religion), and psychological (: 31-81).

According to the feminist theory, as Cameron (1992: 6) claims, language as a medium of representation may manifest a sexist potential in its usage, by being either offensive or androcentric, i.e. “implying that the norm of humanity is male.” Constant exposure to stereotypes or distortions of various kinds, ossified in language and legitimised by culture, results in them being taken for granted, and in their acceptance without thought or challenge. This is what conditioning is all about.

Rakow (1986: 21) explains that “gender is both something we do and something we think with, both a set of social practices and a system of cultural meanings.” This indicates that what people do and what they think about their own and others' actions is, as it were, filtered through gender as a social-cultural construct.

As Marszałek (2000: 283) claims, gender, as a phenomenon that is socially and culturally constructed and mediated, constitutes one factor contributing to the shaping of the linguistic-cultural picture of the world and to the construction of identities. In her opinion, the fundamental assumption in the constructivist approach in sociological and cultural studies consists in a conviction that people create the social-cultural reality around them through everyday social practices. Paradoxically, however, even though people are able to construct the surrounding reality, they tend not to perceive it as a consequence or product of their own actions, but rather as an objectively-given reality.

Furthermore, the differentiation between *sex* (as biologically defined) and *gender* (as a psychological-social-cultural construct) provided researchers with the opportunity not to include the biological context in the studies of, among others, the process of socialisation or the social determinants of male and female roles or personalities. However, as Marszałek (2000: 284) argues, with the passing of time this dimorphism turned out to be problematic as one more reproduction of the nature-versus-culture opposition.

However, though sex and gender may seem to be in a constant mutual relationship, Ortner and Whitehead's (1981) research shows that gender and sexuality are rarely direct consequences of what is biologically given, but are, to a great extent, the outcome of social and cultural practices and processes. The authors' premise is that “natural features of gender, and natural processes of sex and reproduction, furnish only a suggestive and ambiguous

backdrop to the cultural organisation of gender and sexuality” (: 1). According to them, “what gender is, what men and women are, what sort of relations do or should obtain between them [...] do not simply reflect or elaborate upon biological 'givens,' but are largely products of social and cultural processes” (: 1).

Moreover, as Marszałek (2000: 285-286) maintains, regardless of their biological sex, people may declare their own “gender affiliation” and shape their identity, personality, way of behaviour and appearance accordingly. In heterosexual interactions, however, a particular verbal or non-verbal kind of behaviour or characteristics may be interpreted and valued in drastically different ways. Gender in this view is, therefore, a relatively flexible (though not random) set of features, roles and patterns generated in accordance with cultural-social standards of this specific dichotomy, and acquired in the process of socialisation. The same process contributes as well to the so-called *genderlekt*, i.e. “genderised” components of linguistic communication, or in other words, typically male or typically female linguistic styles that are manifested in speech and writing.

The “genderised” features can also be observed in conversations and an overall approach to interaction. Wodak (1997: 149) claims, for example, that “girls and women see conversation as a co-operative activity, men and boys see it as a competitive exchange.” This clearly indicates the position of both genders at the plane of power relations and dominance.

Similarly, Tannen (1996: 8) states that when it comes to the interactional consequences of style differences, including gender differences, these involve domination, not just misunderstanding: “the consequences of style differences work to the disadvantage of members of groups that are stigmatized in our society, and to the advantage of those who have the power to enforce their interpretations.” The “genderised” interactional styles manifest themselves in multiple ways, in a number of linguistic strategies differently acquired and used (and judged) by men and women, such as, for instance, indirectness, interruption, silence or volubility, topic raising, or adversativeness.

Weatherall (2002: 79), on the other hand, speaks in slightly different fashion, pointing out that “gender differences in language are not so much a description of how women and men speak but more a discourse that has material consequences.” The problem is that the discourse and research that have been intended to improve women's status in society, actually work to their disadvantage. As the scholar claims,

gender discourses, beliefs and ways of talking about gender can be thought of as producing power relations between men and women. The institutionalisation of those power relations through, amongst other things, education, the law and the division of labour reproduces the patterns of advantage and disadvantage evident in society. Discourses of gender difference may be considered as part and parcel of knowledge/power complexes that function to disadvantage women. (: 80)

In fact, Weatherall (2002: 80) understands gender as discourse. The linguist's assumption is that "gender is not just reflected in language but the concept of gender is itself constituted by the language used to refer to it." According to Weatherall, gender can be viewed in this way since "it is an integral part of social life that is produced through everyday language and talk" (: 82).

According to West and Zimmerman (1987: 135), gender is what people *do*. In order to successfully function in a society, men and women have to act according to a particular "manual" of acceptable, conventionalised procedures:

to be successful, marking or displaying gender must be finely fitted to situations and modified or transformed as the occasion demands. Doing gender consists of managing such occasions so that, whatever the particulars, the outcome is seen and seeable in context as gender-appropriate or, as the case may be, gender-inappropriate, that is, accountable. (: 135)

The above mentioned "manual" consists of procedures and conventions of various kinds (including appearance, behaviour and personality traits) in order to fit in with *being feminine* or *being masculine*, or rather *doing feminine* and *doing masculine*.

Moreover, as West and Zimmerman (1987: 147) maintain, "gender is a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category."

To sum up, gender appears to be one of the most important categories that organise social structures and arrange the social-cultural space of both men and women so that they will act accordingly. The discursive dimension of gender cannot be denied.

3.4 Significance of symbolic binary oppositions

Gender differentiation is a semiotic phenomenon that has an important meaning culturally.

According to Marszałek (2000: 286-287), social and cultural dimensions of gender are mutually dependent. On the one hand, everyday interaction is based upon cultural symbols and patterns. On the other hand, the repertoire of those symbolic representations is constantly reinforced, modified or reproduced through everyday social practices. The symbolic order of reality constitutes a specific point of reference. The complementary and mutually exclusive binary opposition of *female-male*, or *feminine-masculine*, determines everyday social practices and the cultural perception of the world in a particular society. The above-mentioned binary opposition is semantically analogous to other dualities that construct the perception of reality, such as: *bad-good*, *night-day*, *left-right*, *even-odd*, *sun-moon*, *earth-sky*, *west-east*, *death-life*, *below-above*, or *inferior-superior* respectively. This symbolic construction of

gender is a crucial component of the linguistic-cultural image of the world. Mediated and reinforced linguistically, in various discourses, the concepts of femininity and masculinity influence social practices at a macro-level (a particular society) and a micro-level (individual men and women).

In conclusion, culturally established and symbolically reinforced patterns of gender contribute to subjective interpretation of reality and constitute a significant element of the linguistic-cultural image of the world.

3.5 Men's language versus women's language

The study of gender and discourse has an interdisciplinary character. Scholars of various disciplines have examined patterns of language use related to gender and have attempted to study language in relation to personal, social, cultural or political aspects of gender. This has involved documenting differences in men's and women's language use, describing their speech as well as finding correlations between language and the establishment and maintenance of social inequalities.

One of the most foundational publications in the field is Lakoff's (1975) *Language and Woman's Place* in which the author proves that unequal social roles of men and women are the reason for two-way gender socialisation by which girls are conditioned to use a nonforceful and unassertive style of speech. This use strongly reinforces social inequality and hinders women's access to power, and so completes the vicious circle.

Most importantly, however, Lakoff (1975: 8-19) identifies features of women's language. According to her, women are more likely to apply the following linguistic forms in their speech: weaker expletives (e.g. *oh, dear, goodness* rather than *damn*), trivializing adjectives (e.g. *adorable, charming, divine, gorgeous* rather than *great*), precise colour discriminations (e.g. *ecru, lavender, aquamarine*), tag questions to express opinion (e.g. *The way prices are rising is horrendous, isn't it?*), mitigated requests (e.g. *Would you please close the door?* rather than *Close the door.*) hedges (e.g. *sort of, you know*), rising intonation in declaratives (e.g. as in the second sentence in "*What's for dinner?*" "*Roast beef?*"), intensifiers (e.g. *so*). Women also tend to avoid swear words.

Cameron (2005: 285) categorises Lakoff's studies as a "dominance" approach to language and gender, in which the emphasis was placed on the effects of gender inequality: male dominance and female subordination were considered to be reproduced as well as reflected in gender-differentiated linguistic behaviour." The researcher then indicates Deborah

Tannen (1990) as a representative of what she calls the ‘cultural difference’ approach, according to which “linguistic gender differences were produced not by the subordination of women as such, but by the social arrangements which separate the genders in the formative periods of childhood and adolescence” (: 485). As Cameron further claims, both of these research perspectives may be classified under the label of *modern feminist approach* as opposed to *post-modern feminist approach* (: 484). The first one assumes that gender is constructed upon the foundation of sex, whereas in the other one the distinction between sex and gender is questioned, as it is assumed that sex itself is constructed rather than natural.

Basing their beliefs on Tannen’s research, Scollon and Scollon (1997: 229) also take their stance in the discussion on language and gender, claiming that just like “the discourse systems of different generations cut across the central communicative systems of culture”, so “the discourse systems of gender cut across culture and generations, corporate culture and professional specializations.” Even though men and women participate in the same realms of life, two systems of discourse are developed – one ascribed to men and the other to women.

The above-stated is not the end of empirically proved differentiations in male/female language use, however. Zimmerman and West (1975) indicate that men tend to interrupt more than women. Coats (1993) confirms men use more interruptions and overlaps as well as exhibit greater verbosity and control over the conversation flow. According to the linguist, women are more likely to introduce and talk about topics concerning people and feelings.

According to Wareing (2004: 89), on the other hand, women tend to focus on personal and intimate subjects with the objective of developing and maintaining a friendly relationship, whereas men tend to involve themselves in impersonal topics which come down to technical or factual information exchange with little intimacy required.

Furthermore, Kendall and Tannen (2003: 555) indicate that men are more likely than women to “discursively take up roles of expertise or authority.”

To sum up, as Kendall and Tannen (2003: 561) remark conclusively, there has been an observable change from research on language and gender to research on gender and discourse. This movement indicates the significance of culturally defined meanings concerning linguistic strategies and gender. As Kendall and Tannen claim, “it acknowledges the agency of individuals in creating gendered identities, including the options of resisting and transgressing sociocultural norms for linguistic behaviour. But it also acknowledges the sociocultural constraints within which women and men make their linguistic choices, and the impact of those constraints, whether they are adhered to or departed from” (: 561).

3.6 Values in the linguistic-cultural image of the world

According to Anusiewicz (1994: 3), culture can be understood as a compilation of specific categories distinguished in material reality, and as a set of social patterns of behaviour and attitudes related to the accepted systems and hierarchies of values, norms and judgements that determine and regulate such ways of conduct. These hierarchies of values and the cultural systems of meanings are reflected in language.

As Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska and Fleischer (2000: 20-21) claim, language makes it possible to get access to the world and to get to know it in a definite way because language includes a model of a given world, which model determines the perception of this world and influences the image of it. Moreover, language influences social practices as well as verifies and codifies cultural concepts. In other words, linguists understand language as a medium, or a construct, and simultaneously a process that includes the linguistically-encoded cultural content of a given communication community, which is in turn an expression of the social practices and its experiences that have been collected and reinforced throughout generations. Language, therefore, includes and transmits values and norms of conduct that shape the actions, beliefs and ethical-normative systems of a given social community.

According to Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska and Fleischer (2000: 22), an investigation of the linguistic-cultural picture of the world involves an analysis of the contents, forms and cultural patterns encoded in language and its constructions, and an analysis of the view of reality and the axiological-normative system encoded linguistically. In the most general terms, culture constitutes a compilation of values that are encoded, reinforced and determined linguistically.

Furthermore, as Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska and Fleischer (2000: 30-31) claim, the cultural picture of the world is generated by language and other systems of signs. The construct regulates the manifestations of text and sign production, which in turn represent and arrange the construction of manifestations of culture. The cultural picture of the world, whose fundamental component and medium is the linguistic picture of the world, manifests itself in discourse, symbols, culturally determined manipulative strategies, stereotypes, normalising procedures, etc.

With reference to the linguistic-cultural picture of the world, perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves briefly at this point of the considerations of Puzynina (1991; 1992; 1997) and Krzeszowski (1997; 1999), who can also see an inevitable connection between language, values and culture, even though their approaches differ from each other. As Bartmiński (2006: 131) notices, in Puzynina's approach, values enter language as a distinguished set of linguistic

facts, whereas according to Krzeszowski, on the other hand, values embrace the whole language.

Bartmiński (2006: 133) himself treats values more broadly, as what people consider valuable on the plane of language and culture. As consistent with their common meaning, the linguist's definition of values allows for characteristics of objects and objects themselves, abstract concepts, attitudes, states and situations, ways of conduct that function as ideas to follow, that inspire to take action, motivate and determine ways of behaviour and thinking, or that constitute what people aspire to and what they wish to possess. The linguistic picture of the world, as Bartmiński claims, depends on the assumed (either overtly or covertly) system of values (: 133-134). Values determine the way an experiencer-conceptualiser (an individual language user or a language community) constructs their image of reality and they also integrate different components of the picture of the world that has been reinforced by tradition and constant social practices. As a result, values constitute the cultural and social identity of the language user.

Bartmiński (2006: 135) mentions yet one more problematic issue that scholars may encounter. With reference to the linguistic-cultural picture of the world, the very expression *language of values*⁴⁰ may refer to three kinds of relation between language and values: (1) language as a tool for ascribing value judgements; (2) language as a source of information about a set of values established and internalised by a given community of language users; or (3) language as a value carrier. Each of those three entails a different methodological path.

Finally, Bartmiński (2006: 138) suggests that certain genres in mass and popular culture, once “deprived” of values and valuing in the sense of extra symbolic meaning ascribed to objects, their qualities, actions or events, simply lose their *raison d'être*. Horoscopes and dream books are examples of such genres.

In conclusion, values as an important component of the linguistic-cultural picture of the world contribute to the functioning of fundamental concepts at the level of discourse. They influence the reality and social actions (of individuals and social communities) by being a specific point of reference.

3.7 Prototypes and archetypes of women

For the origins of the words *man* and *woman*, Klein's (1966: 930, 1750) dictionary of etymology suggests the following: *man* from Old English means “human being, man”, other

⁴⁰ The expression *language of values* (*język wartości*) has been introduced by Puzynina (1992); translation mine.

possible original meanings are “human”, “progenitor of mankind”, “one who thinks”, “to think”, “thought”, or “mind”, whereas *woman* refers to “woman-man, wife-man” which is a compound of *wif* meaning “woman, wife” and *man* meaning “human being, man”.

Shipley (1979: 392) suggests yet another origin of *woman* – from “womb-man”, indicating a person who gives birth, or else from “woe-man” or “wif-man”, the wife or female of the man kind.

The etymological roots of the meaning of words may shed a light on the prototypical and archetypical images of women. By way of introduction, however, let us establish what the terms *prototype* and *archetype* refer to, and how similar their definitions are.

To begin with the most general dictionary meaning, Richards and Schmidt et al. (2002: 432) define prototype as “a person or object which is considered (by many people) to be typical of its class or group.” According to the researchers, the prototype theory helps to explain how concepts are formed and to what extent particular concepts may be considered universal or specific among cultures or languages. They also point out that the prototype theory may explain the ability to communicate appropriately in various social situations, since it assumes that people learn to associate particular words, expressions and overall communicative behaviour with people who typically apply them as well as with situations in which they are typically applied.

According to the encyclopaedic definition by Bussmann, Trauth and Kazzazi (1996: 963-964), prototypes can be understood in three ways: (1) as “the model or proto-image of all representatives of the meaning of a word or of a 'category'”; (2) as “the bundle of typical features of a category”; or (3) as typical features of a category that can manifest “a higher or lower 'cue validity'”.

Grzegorzczkova (1998: 110) claims that one of the dictionary meanings refers to the etymology of *prototype* as something original, a model, a first pattern to be imitated or developed. This meaning resembles a somewhat genetic relationship. A different understanding of *prototype* lacks this genetic aspect and stands for a model example of something, a standard.

Hebrajska (1998: 117-118), similarly to Bussmann, Trauth and Kazzazi (1996), indicates three possible uses of the term *prototype* in semantics. The first refers to the best example or representative of a given category, the second to a set of typical characteristics in a particular category, and the third to a core meaning and characteristics, as opposed to some peripheral qualities. Hebrajska also explains the relation between the notion of *prototype* and *archetype*: only in the case of encountering a phenomenon that does not fit any of the already

known stereotypes, is it possible to refer to a specific model or pattern that can be called an archetype (: 117-118). Nonetheless, archetype only temporarily functions as a model. It is only until prototype appears, the prototype which becomes a model due to the fact of existence of other comparable examples from which this prototype has been distinguished.

The etymology of the words *prototype* and *archetype* also indicates their close connection. According to Klein (1966: 100, 1259), *archetype* stands for “pattern, model”, or “stamped first” from “first” and “a blow, mark of a blow”; whereas *prototype* stands for “original, primitive”, from “first” and “blow, impress, model, pattern”.

As for archetypes of femininity and masculinity, Bolen (1984; 1989) – a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst – enumerates several goddess and god archetypes, i.e. the archetypes of both genders, that she believes exist within human minds. The author describes six goddess archetypes corresponding to six Olympian goddesses: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Artemis, Athena and Aphrodite (plus Persephone, whose mythology is strictly connected with that of Demeter), as well as a number of god archetypes represented by Zeus, Poseidon and Hades (these three in relation to the father archetype), as well as Apollo, Hermes, Ares, Hephaestus and Dionysus (representing the generation of the sons).

Moore and Gillette (1990), on the other hand, describe masculine and feminine archetypes corresponding to stages of human life. These are characterised by different experiences, ambitions, expectations and challenges. The archetypes of masculinity are those of the Warrior, the Lover, the Magician and the King, while the archetypes of femininity are those of the Maiden, the Mother, the Crone and the Queen respectively.⁴¹

Prototypical and archetypal images of males and females are certainly present in contemporary culture and serve various functions. According to Stevens (2002: xii), “human experience and human behaviour are complex products of environmental and hereditary forces. The environment *activates* the archetype which *mediates* the experience and the behaviour.” In this sense, “archetypes are intermediate between genes and experience: they are the organizing schemata by which the innate becomes personal.”

Stevens (2002: 44-45) bases his argument on the Jungian approach, according to which “archetypes , being 'active living dispositions' or 'living organisms, endowed with generative force', have the capacity to initiate, control and mediate the common behavioural characteristics and typical experiences of our kind, even though we are, for the most part, unaware of them.”

⁴¹ A short characteristics of these archetypes is also presented by Ziębka-Białożny (2009: 50) who uses them in her analysis of singles advertisements.

Stevens (2002: xii) himself sees the need to revisit archetypes so as to understand what is happening to modern culture; after all, archetypes contribute to the shaping of the identities of men and women in contemporary reality, and they contribute to how they perceive and experience themselves and the world.

3.8 Sex stereotypes

Let us first establish what *stereotype* refers to. The literature concerning stereotypes is obviously too extensive to be thoroughly discussed within one subchapter. However, the issue of stereotyping requires a little attention as one of the factors that contribute to the linguistic-cultural picture of women as well as to broadly understood social practices and discourse. After all, stereotypes play an important role in the processes of human cognition.

The notion of stereotype, which now has an interdisciplinary status, was introduced by Lippmann (1922: 3) who coined a metaphor defining the specificity of stereotypes as “pictures in our heads.” This allowed the perception and investigation of them as a cognitive phenomenon, as Kurcz (2001: 3) claims. On the plane of linguistics also, according to Bartmiński (2009: 53), stereotypes have been analysed from different perspectives: from the perspective of communication by Bartoszyński (1971); from the perspective of the history of literature and culture by Bystroń (1935/1980), Kot (1955; 1957), Mitosek (1974), Święch (1977; 1982) or Magnuszewski (1983); and from the perspective of philosophy of language by Putnam (1975) or Schaff (1978; 1981). One of the first linguistic publications concerning stereotypes was that by Quasthoff (1973).⁴²

As Pickering (2004: 21) claims, “stereotyping is not simply a psychological problem. Its psychological dimension is always realized within certain social and historical contexts which condition and direct it as a process.” It is, therefore, important to always take stereotyping into consideration in relation to these contexts. Moreover, as Pickering argues, stereotyping is “a form of power, a power over how others are thought about which operates through spoken and written discourse” (: 21). It does not simply happen in language, but is accompanied by visual images, conventionalised interaction patterns, musical lyrics or ritualised gestures.

Wojtaszek (2004: 217) argues that stereotypes “constitute useful default interpretations of people, things, phenomena, events and qualities, which facilitate mental

⁴² Bartmiński's (2009) publication cited here is a valuable compendium devoted to stereotypes and their linguistic dimension; apart from a thorough investigation of the very phenomenon and a presentation of precious examples, it offers a great compilation of bibliographical references.

organisation and segmentation of reality.” Although stereotypes are predominantly mental constructs, they are undoubtedly connected with the linguistic aspect of cognition. According to Wojtaszek, “stereotypical thinking shapes the way we put thoughts into words and contributes to the way we categorise the world linguistically” (: 217).

Obviously, stereotyping, as it usually occurs in sciences, can be approached from different perspectives. Even within the field of linguistics itself, stereotypes are a matter of dispute, and are often treated ambiguously. However, as Chlebda (1998: 32) maintains, when it comes to studying stereotypes, two schools of thought can be distinguished: those linguists who mostly focus on a purely linguistic dimension of stereotypes, on what is surface and observable, and those who approach them more holistically and also concentrate on stereotypes at a deeper level, including their mental aspect. The first group analyses and describes expressions labelled to particular stereotypes recalled from memory and compares them to the so called linguistic products. The other group is interested in specific judgements and interpretations concerning particular fragments of reality, the ones that dwell in speakers' minds, as representatives of a particular communicative community.

As Grzegorzczkova (1998: 113) maintains, in comparison to prototypes which are linked to *extension* (or else *denotation*), i.e. a set of all actual things a particular word describes, stereotypes are linked to *intension*, i.e. a set of all possible things that a word, an expression or a symbol may describe. It is, therefore, reasonable to understand prototypes as best examples or a set of characteristic features in a category, whereas stereotypes can be understood as relatively stable connotations or associations expressed by means of language.

According to Hebrajska (1998: 118), on the other hand, there is a specific relation between stereotypes and metaphors. To be more specific, metaphors make use of what is associated with particular objects, events or people to imply certain meanings.

Sawicka (1998: 147-148) links stereotypes to the process of denomination, i.e. giving names to objects, people, actions or phenomena in accordance with the specific rules of a given language system, the result of which is lexical units. According to the linguist, assuming that stereotypes are the products of culture and *stereotype* equals *convention*, it can be deduced that stereotypes determine the course of denomination.

In linguistics, stereotypes have also been discussed in terms of metonymy. Lakoff (1990: 79), for example, claims that “social stereotypes are cases of metonymy – where a subcategory has a socially recognized status as standing for the category as a whole, usually for the purpose of making quick judgements about people.”

Bierwiazzonek (2004: 33) shares this view claiming that “ordinary categorization is immanently metonymic, in the sense that the stimulus, whether verbal or perceptual, usually does not activate the dispositional representation of the whole category, but rather, one of its subcategories.” The meaning that emerges in this process depends on the representations of the category and of the stimulus. According to linguist, “some categories are represented in terms of [...] *metonymic models*. The stereotype is one such model” (: 33).

Stereotypes of men and women, therefore, as any other stereotypes, can be approached from various perspectives, including these highlighted above. Sex stereotypes, and – since Unger (1979) introduced the notion of *gender* to differentiate between biological differences between sexes and the socio-culturally determined ones – gender stereotypes, have, indeed, been extensively investigated by representatives of the humanities.

The perception of sex differences is to a certain extent a manifestation of the process of stereotyping, since it involves the expectations held by members of a given community internalised through socialisation. As Reber and Reber (2001: 674) claim, sex stereotypes are “the typical beliefs concerning the particular patterns of behaviour that are expected of persons according to their sex.”

There are different theories explaining the dichotomy of sex stereotypes, as known today. Wojciszke (2002: 442-453) demonstrates three. The first theory focuses on socialisation as a decisive factor: during the process of socialisation, each member of a given society acquires particular value systems, beliefs and patterns of behaviour that enable them to successfully function in their culture; within a certain community, people acculturate to its commonly accepted social norms, language, hierarchies of values, established social institutions and life style, to its way of thinking and perception of reality and its linguistic description. In this view, sex is a specific construct of culture, another name for which is gender. The second theory is the evolutionist one. Here, the explanation comes from biology and evolution: the adaptive challenges that males and females encounter have determined their patterns of behaviour in various fields of life. The third theory is referred to as a structural-social one. According to this latter view, gender differences result from the different places that men and women occupy in social structures and from the different roles they fill in terms of division of labour or power distribution. Each sex is assumed to specialise in different activities and to develop so as to maximize their effectiveness. Even though each of the above mentioned theories provides logical and reasonable explanations, it is most likely that all the factors have made their own contribution to the present state of affairs.

As far as stereotypically male and female features are concerned, according to Wojciszke (2002: 453-454), the stereotype of femininity includes a concentration on social relations, other people, feelings, modesty and warmth, whereas the stereotype of masculinity embraces concentration on tasks, promotion, gathering reserves, assertiveness, ambition and aggressiveness. Many of the stereotypical images are shared across different cultures. In the same way, however, they also influence the shaping of individual identity and have far-reaching intrapersonal and interpersonal effects.

Indeed, prevailing gender stereotypes, gender roles and gender-linked identity appear to a large extent to be shared cross-culturally. This has been proved by, for example, Williams and Best's (1990) studies and later once again confirmed by Williams, Satterwhite and Best's (1999) research conducted in a number of countries. The content of stereotypes of femininity and masculinity consists of a number of features most often ascribed to women and men. According to Williams, Satterwhite and Best's research, the adjectives that describe a stereotypical man are as follows: *active, adventurous, aggressive, ambitious, autocratic, coarse, courageous, cruel, daring, dominant, energetic, enterprising, forceful, independent, inventive, logical, masculine, progressive, robust, rude, self-confident, stern, strong, tough, unemotional*. Women, on the other hand, are stereotypically *affectionate, anxious, attractive, charming, complaining, curious, dependent, dreamy, emotional, fearful, feminine, fussy, meek, mild, sensitive, sexy, shy, soft-hearted, submissive, superstitious, talkative, timid, weak and whiny* (: 519).

Another scholar who presents a number of gender labels based on common judgements and stereotypes is Halpern (2000: 238). The features that are compared in this analysis include personality characteristics, roles and physical features. The category of traits includes independence, competitiveness, warmth and emotionality. The category of role behaviours concerns the roles of being a financial provider, of taking initiative with the opposite sex, of taking care of children, and of cooking meals. Finally, the category of physical characteristics includes the properties of being muscular, graceful, and small-boned, and the feature of having deep voice.

The results are quoted below (please see *Table 2*):

Characteristic	Judgements	
	Men %	Women %
trait		
independent	78	58
competitive	82	64
warm	66	77
emotional	56	84
role behaviours		
financial provider	83	47
takes initiative with opposite sex	82	54
takes care of children	50	85
cooks meals	42	85
physical characteristics		
muscular	64	36
deep voice	73	30
graceful	45	68
small-boned	39	62

Table 2 *Men and women described stereotypically, according to Halpern (2000)*

According to the above information, the traits that stereotypically tend to be ascribed to men are being independent and competitive, whereas women are stereotypically labelled as warm and emotional beings. As for social and family-oriented roles, men are more likely to be viewed as financial providers and initiators of social interactions. Women are stereotypically expected to take care of children and home, including preparing meals. Similarly, physical features also show a binary opposition of men being muscular and women being small-boned. Men are also characterised by deep voice, whereas women are stereotypically described as graceful.

The stereotypical feminine-masculine dichotomy undoubtedly determines people's perception of the reality and of themselves. Sex/gender stereotypes are not entirely negative phenomenon as such. As Mandal (2003: 39) claims, the dichotomy that they preserve may let individuals find their place in society. In this sense, stereotypes serve an adaptive function by determining social roles clearly and literally. Nevertheless, stereotypical thinking may, on the other hand, constitute a serious barrier for individuals on their path to self-realisation and self-development.

Obviously, even though sex/gender stereotypes, as with any other, are very resistant to change, the repertoire of expectations does evolve, or adapts, so to speak, to the contemporary social-cultural reality. According to Mandal (2004: 18), an increased tendency for gender stereotypes to change has been observed since the intensified feminist movement in the nineteen seventies. The traditional stereotypes of women have gradually been weakening. However, new, modern stereotypes have taken the helm. It seems that both stereotypical images – traditional and modern – function simultaneously. One or the other is activated, however, depending on the situation at any given time.

3.9 Social construction of male and female body

Gender is closely linked to the corporeal nature of humans because it comes into existence and develops through the body. Furthermore, the body itself actively contributes to sustaining cultural conventions and requirements and the socio-cultural order. Gender, therefore, embraces not only social and cultural values concerning femininity and masculinity, images and patterns to follow, but also the body, its broadly understood corporality and sexuality, and the complex interrelations between all these.

Body itself is not only a purely biological phenomenon. Human corporeality is subject to social influence due to its existence and functioning in historical and cultural contexts. The process of social influence on the body is the process of its socialisation. In other words, the socialisation of the body equals placing the body within the network of social meanings and requirements.

In accordance with the concept of symbolic interactionism, the self is socially constructed. It is what every individual acquires in the process of socialisation. According to Mead (1975), who introduced the basic concepts of the theory, the fact of experiencing the body is not sufficient for the process of creation of the self. An individual must be put into a context of social meanings. It is through the process of socialisation, first within family and later also within other social groups and communities, that girls and boys learn what it means to be female or male, and what social roles are entailed in the fact of being a woman or a man. In the first phase, children observe their *significant others* (mum and dad), imitate their behaviour and internalise information concerning being male or female. Later, other reference groups also set boys' and girls' social experiences and a specific system of values.

Connell's (1987: 66-90) considerations on the body and social practice come down to the argument that can be divided into three main points. First of all, he establishes the

importance of biology and evolutionary processes to humans, and argues that the differences and inequalities within social reality are based on socially constructed categories which have no permanent foundation and justification in the body. Male and female bodies are defined as radically different according to social criteria and through social practices that *negate* actual human embodiment. This negation of biology comes down to its distortion, in fact; as Shilling (1997: 95) clarifies Connell's view, it is a "contradiction between social processes of categorisation and the bodily bases on which they rest." Connell's second claim, according to Shilling is that gendered social practices *transcend* the bodies and transform them – the meaning and character of male and female bodies is changed in the course of actual physical alterations (: 94). Thirdly, negation and transcendence are in constant interrelation: according to Shilling explanation of Connell's theory, "gendered categories and practices operate as material forces which help to shape and form women's and men's bodies in ways that reinforce particular images of femininity and masculinity. The mind's conceptualization of bodies is closely related to people's experiences of bodies" (: 94). In this way, embodied through gendered social practices, dominant conceptualisations of femininity and masculinity are reproduced, serving as justification and legitimation of the established social categories which place women in a subordinate position in patriarchal culture, stressing their physical inferiority as the weaker sex. This mechanism certainly involves the phenomenon of the Pygmalion effect.

According to Elias (1980: 367-484), the human body is subject to the process of *civilisation* which proceeds in two stages: the stage of *socialisation* and the stage of *rationalisation*. His investigation of customs gave rise to the concept of a *civilised body*. In short, the process of socialisation is based on two fundamental elements: first, the increased social control over bodily functions and, second, the placing of social meanings, accepted norms and disapproved patterns of behaviour in the body. Rationalisation, on the other hand, is what follows. The socially enforced norms (which are intended to make individuals more predictable), the existence of an external coercive apparatus, the need to be a member of a social group, the feeling of shame – all these entail greater self-control of individuals who judge their own actions and their consequences rationally. Only after they have internalised a set of social rules and norms of custom, conduct and fashion claimed as appropriate in various situations are individuals able to rationalise and control their emotions and impulses, and to monitor their own and others' actions.

Shilling (1997: 166) notices yet another stage of the process of civilisation of the body – "the progressive *individualization* of the body and self". Individualised bodies are to a great

extent self-aware and able to perceive themselves as individuals fundamentally different from others: in contemporary societies, “the individualization of bodies has important consequences for the advance of manners as it encourages among people a greater degree of reflexivity about their bodies, and a perception of themselves as different from others” (: 167). The consequence of these civilising processes is the distance that is created between bodies, on the one hand, and the fact that bodies have to be managed in accord with social norm more than ever before, on the other. According to Shilling, “in civilizing processes, individuals change by becoming more aware of themselves and others as separate entities, and exerting more control over their bodies” (: 167). The problem is that, as the researcher later claims,

the development of civilized bodies tends to leave people alone with their bodies acting as barriers to contact and meaningful communication with other people. Standards of body management demand that people monitor and control their bodies, yet the implication of this affect control is that they become stale in and with their bodies. The existence of strong, trans-personal social and religious meaning systems, provided people in court society with a rationale for these actions. In contemporary society, however, individuals are increasingly left alone with a heightened reflexivity about the limitations of their civilized bodies, yet are without meaningful socially legitimated resources for justifying this situation. (: 167)

Moreover, the increased control over bodies concerns women to a larger extent than men. This is an effect of intensified scientific and medical influences that are a part of the process of rationalisation of the body. Awareness of the body increases the level of control, which manifests itself in various discourses.

As Buczkowski (2005: 76) claims, at a given stage of their development, at a particular moment of the process of rationalisation of the body, namely *institutionalisation* and *medicalisation*, discourses of various kind have introduced the differentiation into male and female elements as we know them today. The discourses embrace the changes in appearance, clothes and fashion, the body's functioning at the physiological level (cleanliness, dirt or smell, among others), and the changes concerning particular parts of the body. The scholar claims that these discourses and the changes within them, closely connected and interrelated with the process of civilisation of the body, constitute the foundation for the contemporary perception of the body, corporeality and sexuality of men and women.

According to Buczkowski (2005: 20), body has become a means of conveying social and cultural values, since the values are inscribed in the body itself. As a consequence, body participates in the processes of establishing, sustaining and reproducing the structural divisions in social reality. This means that the society-body relation is an interrelation in fact. Buczkowski assumes that the way that body (as well as its part in establishing and reproducing gender division) is defined, perceived and created is changeable and generated culturally and socially (: 21). Apart from its biological dimension, body serves as a place for

locating social messages, discourses of various kind, and as a means for conveying values to other segments of social life. Social meanings are not only inscribed in body, but also act as a means for their reproduction in a given social system. All this contributes to and guarantees the maintenance of a social structure. The scholar by no means undermines the material properties of the body, as he does not neglect its biological and physiological dimension, but tries to explain how the changing ways of thinking about the body have determined the way of treating it (: 24). According to Buczkowski, therefore, “body and its cultural meanings constitute a fundamental social tissue, on which other discourses highlighting both the similarities and differences between genders may develop”⁴³ (: 25).

To sum up, female and male bodies are a reply to the existing conventionalised conceptions of femininity and masculinity. The civilising processes, the cultural, social and historical context that has subjected the female body to intensified concern in social sciences and medicine, and the mechanisms of reproduction of the gender binary opposition system have resulted in the situation that how a contemporary woman shapes her identity is based on the body.

3.10 Government of the body

As Buczkowski (2005: 8) claims, the Cartesian concept of mind-body dichotomy has resulted in significant consequences for both males and females. Not only has the symbolic dualism anchored permanently in west European culture – the dualism that the mind is associated with what is masculine and the body with what is feminine, but also other consequences, such as the ascribing of negative values to the body, so that it requires management, and the establishment of a construct in which the mind has control over the body. The latter, as symbolically reinforced, has shaped the cultural feminine-masculine dichotomy.

Foucault (1995) reversed this relation, claiming that it is the body which, having been inscribed the knowledge-power relationship, has become a place of creation of and consolidation of the subjectivity of individuals. According to Buczkowski (2005: 9), the capitalist system treats body according to the Cartesian concept, that is as a machine. The bodies of men and women have been placed in the apparatus of the economy, so that the body and women have ended up in the private sphere, whereas the public sphere has been dominated by the mind and men.

⁴³ “Ciało i jego znaczenia kulturowe stanowią podstawową tkankę społeczną, na której mogą rozwijać się pozostałe dyskursy podkreślające i podobieństwa i różnice pomiędzy płciami.”; translation mine.

Turner's (2008: 77) conception of *bodily order* is another approach to the significance of the body in a capitalist system and patriarchal culture. For him, bodily order is strictly connected with control over sexuality, especially female sexuality, which appears to play an important role in the patriarchal system of power. According to the scholar, every social system has to face and solve problems connected with the body in the following spheres: first, regulating the functioning of bodies in space; second, regulating bodies in time; third, representation of bodies in social space; and fourth, restraining the inner drives and sexual impulses of bodies. Turner claims that “since the government of the body is in fact the government of sexuality, the problem of regulation is in practice the regulation of female sexuality by a system of patriarchal power” (: 82). To each of the categories of control and government of the body, the researcher ascribes a dominant illness, and in his conclusions, he argues that

female sickness – hysteria, depression, melancholy, agoraphobia, anorexia – is ultimately a psychosomatic expression of emotional and sexual anxieties which are built into the separation of the public world of authority and the private world of feeling [...] this can be rested as the [...] relationship between men as bearers of public reason and women as embodiments of private emotions. (: 99)

In Goffman's (1959: 15) conception, bodies are the medium for communication and for the presentation of self:

when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation. This report is concerned with some of the common techniques that persons employ to sustain such impressions and with some of the common contingencies associated with the employment of these techniques.

Using a metaphor of a theatre and of people performing roles, Goffman (1959: 23-24) explains that the *personal front*, which enables the successful performance of a role, embraces *appearance* and *manner*. In everyday life, people are similar to actors on a stage, and certain attributes and items of expressive equipment that they use contribute to an appropriate *performance* in this theatre of everyday life. The means of expression, or else elements of personal front, may include “insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like” (: 24). As part of the personal front, one may also undoubtedly include gender characteristics.

Shilling (1997: 93), on the other hand, describes different approaches to the government of the body as a social construct.⁴⁴ He appreciates both Goffman's theory of

⁴⁴ Shilling's (1997) publication offers an interesting theoretical elaboration on the sociology of the body, citing and explaining different contemporary theories, their strong points and drawbacks. An impressive bibliography makes the book worth handing out for anyone interested in the field.

manageable body and Turner's theory of bodily order as being fundamentally legitimate in the structural aspect, and convincing for logical deduction and exemplary explanation. However, at the same time, he notices that the conceptions built in the paradigm of social constructionism – including, among others, Foucault's (1980; 1995; 1998; 2002), Douglas's⁴⁵ (1966; 1970), Turner's (2008) and Goffman's (1959) – focus too much on bodies as social products, leaving the understanding of the body as a “property” of individual members of society insufficiently attended to.

Shilling (1997: 4-5) himself attempts at analysing the body as a project: “in the affluent West, there is a tendency for the body to be seen as an entity which is in the process of becoming; a *project* which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an *individual's* self-identity.” In an extensive fragment, the researcher explains his view as follows:

My analysis of the body as a project in high modernity involves two initial propositions: that we now have the knowledge and the technical ability in the affluent West to intervene in, and substantially alter, the body; and that growing numbers of people are increasingly aware of the body as an unfinished entity which is shaped and 'completed' partly as a result of lifestyle choices. The idea of the body as a project does not entail that everyone has the willingness or the ability radically to transform their body. It does presuppose that people are generally aware of these transformative developments, and that there is a strong tendency in the conditions of contemporary Western societies for people to become increasingly associated with, and concerned about, their bodies. This is not to imply that people are the first to be concerned about their bodies. [...] However, in contrast to pre-modern societies, where the body tended to be marked by traditional signs in ritualized settings, the body in modernity is more frequently treated as a phenomenon to be shaped, decorated and trained as an expression of an *individual's* identity. (: 200)

In the bodily order theory, an individual seems to be deprived of the body which, in turn, has been given/taken under the dominance and management of the powers and institutions that are to ensure the stability of the social system. As Shilling (1997: 93) mentions, this may result in the accusation that the concept “provides a relatively *disembodied* view of the individual in society.”

The missing element in Turner's (2008) theory – an approach to the body as “an *enabling property* of individuals” (Shilling 1997: 93) - is provided by Frank (1991), whose concept extends some of Goffman's (1959) ideas concerning the body as an element of human agency. Another important idea that is offered by his theory is the consideration of the body

⁴⁵ Douglas's (1966; 1970) work has had a considerable influence on anthropological investigations of the body as socially constructed. She has analysed the body in terms of a specific receptor of social meaning as well as a symbol of society. As Shilling (1997: 73) summarises Douglas's (1970) contribution, she claims that “the human body is the most readily available image of a social system” and her suggestion is that “ideas about the human body correspond closely to prevalent ideas about society.” Moreover, the body in Douglas's (1970) conception is a metaphor of society as a whole, which means that social crisis, as experienced when individual's identities and national borders are threatened, makes it more likely to show more concern with maintaining the prevailing bodily boundaries as well as the purity of bodies.

as a necessarily corporeal phenomenon, which happens to affect the way individuals experience and use their bodies made of flesh. Frank's basic assumptions are as follows:

Theory needs to apprehend the body as both medium and outcome of social 'body techniques,' and society as both medium and outcome of the sum of these techniques. Body techniques are socially given – individuals may improvise on them but rarely make up any for themselves – but these techniques are only instantiated in their practical use *by* bodies, *on* bodies. Moreover, these techniques are as much resources *for* bodies as they are constraints *on* them; constraints enable as much as they restrict. (: 48)

According to Frank (1991: 48-49), individual bodies exist and function among multiple discourses and institutions:

discourses imply cognitive mappings of the body's possibilities and limitations, which bodies experience as already there for their self-understanding. [...] Institutions [...] have a specificity within both space and time. A discourse can only be spoken or enacted; it is nowhere but in that act or speech. An institution is a physical place where one can go, which may or may not be there any longer.

There is a mutual relation between discourses and institutions “since institutions are constituted in and through discourses, and discourses are instantiated and modified in institutional sites” (Frank 1991: 49). Bodies, however, obviously do not emerge out of either discourses or institutions, but out of other bodies, female ones. This makes Frank claim that the third dimension of the constitution of the body is its *corporeality*. Bodies exist and function in time and space, just as physiologies do. Nonetheless, as Frank argues,

'physiology' is at any given time produced in a discourse which seeks some 'truth' of bodies, and the history of physiology proves only that this truth may be redefined without apparent limit. Empirical bodies do have real limits. Beyond the relative discourse of physiology, corporeality remains an obdurate fact. There is a flesh which is formed in the womb, transfigured (for better or worse) in its life, dies and decomposes. (: 49)

The constitution of the body involves, therefore, all of the three components, i.e. institutions, discourses and corporeality.

3.11 Female body in patriarchal culture – a feminist approach

The present subchapter will provide only a sample of feminist criticism, or rather a feminist conception of the body by quoting selected, most prominent representatives in the field.

In classical feminist theories, the female body has generally been approached in one of two ways, although both approaches have found the biological sex of women a source of oppression. One group of feminists has focused on the biological aspects of female sexuality as a limiting factor, whereas the other group has attempted a re-evaluation of female physiology and searches for possibilities of a change of biological determinants (Buczkowski 2005: 40).

According to de Beauvoir (1960: 8), “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.” Both female and male bodies govern the way women and men function in society. Nonetheless, the female body, due to its biological specificity and reproductive functions (ability to be pregnant and give birth, menstruation, menopause), is far more affected by biological destiny. This shows in the dilemmas and ambivalence that women experience, a conflict between yielding to their biological destiny or being an autonomous individual. Even though the scholar pessimistically assumes female physiology to be a very limiting factor in a woman's life, she can see a chance for women, claiming that the body does not fully determine either women or men, since the body is also a situation that can be changed or developed and a potential that can provide many possibilities.

Ortner's (1974: 67) analyses of various societies revealed the fact of universality of female subordination and devaluation: even though particular cultural conceptions concerning women and symbolisations of femininity are incredibly diverse, and on many occasions even mutually contradictory, “the secondary status of woman in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact.” Ortner explains this state of matters – the subordinate position and the universal devaluation of women – with the concept of nature-culture dualism: “woman is being identified with – or [...] seems to be a symbol of – something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself [...], and that is *nature* in the most generalized sense” (: 71-72). This means that in a patriarchal society both women and nature are negatively valued, which situation is a consequence of females being closer to nature due to their biologically determined and biologically restricted bodies. Men are not physiologically limited to such an extent, which brings them closer to culture and offers opportunity for its development.

While the above mentioned feminists view the female body as a curse of biology, Firestone (2003) sees it as an object of possible changes. At the beginning of her considerations, Firestone polemicalises with and criticises the Marxist concept of social classes, as biased against women and lacking an appropriate concern with women and their labour (: 3-14). To make a clear differentiation between the notion of a social-economic class and the class of women, she introduces the notion of a *sex class*. Firestone admits that “biology itself – procreation – is at the origin of the dualism” and “unlike economic class, *sex class* sprang directly from a biological reality: men and women were created different, and not equal” (: 8).

The existence of sex classes is based upon female biology, more specifically on the possibility, or necessity, of child-bearing and upbringing, which is limiting for female potential. Therefore, the researcher suggests a revolution: women have to take control over their bodies and means of reproduction, which have been governed by the system of biological family. Women have to take control over human reproductivity as well as the institution of child-rearing. Technological advancement and cybernetics are to help them to become fully autonomous and politically and economically independent. The feminist's theory is not free from drawbacks, however: first, the point of reference is, in fact, the world of men and male values; second, the biological revolution is utopian in the sense that once biological family and sex classes have been abolished, women would no longer be defined in the same way as they are today in the still prevailing male world.

Cixous (1976), on the other hand, views the female body as an opportunity for a woman. Her first claim is that a similar class situation, resulting in a shared interest, is a source of common experiences for women. Concerned mainly with writing, the scholar claims unequivocally that male and female styles of writing are fundamentally different and rooted in different ways of experiencing sexuality. Cixous herself argues unequivocally that

that there is such a thing as *marked* writing; that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is ever suspected or admitted, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural – hence political, typically masculine – economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that's frightening since it's often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction; that this locus has grossly exaggerated all the signs of sexual opposition (and not sexual difference), where woman has never her turn to speak-this being all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is precisely *the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures. (: 879)

Women write with their bodies. However, the bodies determined by male perception in the culture of the West have to be decensored for, as Cixous (1976: 880) maintains, “censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time.”

Irigaray (1985), similarly to Cixous (1976), prefers to see a chance in the female body, in her corporeality. However, unlike Cixous, Irigaray claims that both men and women can write with their bodies, with only the differences in writing style and the perception of the world resulting from anatomical differences between them. In her works, the feminist uses the rhetoric of biological discourse and ascribes a different meaning to anatomy than the one usually accepted, which may be seen as a weak point of her theory: the assumption of biological foundations of writing is questionable, for the author does not take into consideration those individuals who experience problems with their biological sex. However, apart from that, Irigaray touches the troublesome issue of language as a masculine system of

representation, as being an obstacle in truly female expression (: 84). The scholar claims that 'femininity', in the form that we know it today, is a role, an image, and a value which have been imposed on women by male systems of representation. Irigaray also emphasises that social inferiority of women is constantly reinforced and complicated by the fact that women lack access to language, "except through recourse to 'masculine' systems of representation which disappropriate from her relation to herself and to other women" (: 85). According to Irigaray, this implies that, in fact, the 'feminine' can never be identified "except by and for the masculine, the reciprocal proposition not being 'true'" (: 85).

In her corporeal⁴⁶ feminist theories, Grosz (1994) maintains that the body is in a state of ambivalence since it is perceived as a reason for oppression on the one hand, and a promise of emancipation and change on the other. In reaction to the inapplicability of radical social constructionism, Grosz approaches former feminist considerations over the body critically, and gives her own point of view:

For constructionists, the sex/gender opposition, which is a recasting of the distinction between the body, or what is biological and natural, and the mind, or what is social and ideological, is still operative. Presuming that biology or sex is a fixed category, feminists have tended to focus on transformations at the level of gender. Their project has been to minimize biological differences and to provide them with different cultural meanings and values. There also remains a possibility of the equalization of relations between the two sexes only if the psychological functioning of each – gender – can be understood and transformed. Equalization does not require a transformation or suppression of the body. The body itself, in the strongest version of this position, is irrelevant to political transformation, and in the weakest version is merely a vehicle for psychological change, an instrument for a 'deeper' effect. What needs to be changed are attitudes, beliefs, and values rather than the body itself. (: 17)

Explaining the foundations of her own vision, Grosz (1994: x-xi) substantiates the assumptions of her ontological thesis as follows:

I will deny that there is the 'real,' material body on one hand and its various cultural and historical representations on the other. It is my claim [...] that these representations and cultural inscriptions quite literally constitute bodies and help to produce them as such. The bodies in which I am interested are culturally, sexually, racially specific bodies, the mobile and changeable terms of cultural production. As an essential internal condition of human bodies, a consequence of perhaps their organic openness to cultural completion, bodies must take the social order as their productive nucleus. Part of their own 'nature' is an organic or ontological 'incompleteness' or lack of finality, an amenability to social completion, social ordering and organization.

Another feminist – Battersby (1998) – attempts to search for a philosophical authorisation of female voice and subjectivity. She does not try to reject philosophical preoccupations; on the contrary, her work "develops a kind of 'descriptive' metaphysics" (: 5). In the heterogeneous tradition, the feminist tries to seek out some solutions that can be

⁴⁶ According to Hyży (2003: 7), the word *corporeal* that Grosz (1994) uses allows her not only to express the meaning of "being connected with the body," but also to evoke additional associations thanks to the part of *real* in the adjective, which emphasizes a very real, material property of the body, physical corporeality. As Hyży (: 17) later explains, the notion of *corporeal feminism* that the feminist introduces, as Grosz (1994) herself comments on, is to function as an opposition to the adjective *volatile* used in the title of her book.

suitably modified so as to serve the needs of the feminist movement. What she does dissociate herself from, is epistemology, however. Battersby is interested in “models of identity for 'the object' – and, in particular for a body that is capable of generating a new body from within its 'own' flesh and from within the horizons of its 'own' space-time” (: 6). The scholar, therefore, treats “'woman' as 'object,' in order to find new models of the self/other relationship and new ways of thinking 'identity' – and, in particular, persistence of an embodied self through mutation, birth and change” (: 7). In her considerations on the body, she includes also male bodies, claiming that differences between male bodies and female bodies do not result in significantly disparate experiences. The feeling of ambivalence and phenomenality within women is exclusively a consequence of social and cultural determination and not their essential otherness.

Butler (1993: 8) assumes that any reference to the body is always discursive, that it is discourse that constructs the subject. In her view, oppression appears at the level of constitution of the sexed body matter. According to the scholar, “construction is neither a subject nor its act, but a process of reiteration by which both 'subjects' and 'acts' come to appear at all. There is no power that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability” (: 9). Butler's basic assumption is, therefore, that the notion of matter should not be considered in terms of “site or surface, but as *a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter*” (: 9). As for socially and culturally constructed sexual difference of male and female bodies, the feminist maintains and explains in an extensive fragment that

Sexual difference [...] is never simply a function of material differences which are not in some way both marked and formed by discursive practices. Further, to claim that sexual differences are indissociable from discursive demarcations is not the same as claiming that discourse causes sexual difference. The category of 'sex' is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a 'regulatory ideal.' In this sense, then, 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls. Thus, 'sex' is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, 'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law. (: 1-2)

In her works on female bodies in patriarchal culture, Bordo (1993) takes a more practical stance than the above mentioned feminists. Her interest is in the gender determined representations prevailing in contemporary culture, which cause all the trouble with the

female body at the very material and physiological level. Bordo (1998: 89) admits that “certainly we are embedded in language. We are also creatures with a physiology that limits us, even in the kinds of language we have developed.” We cannot avoid historically accumulated discourses and representations. However, the feminist goes beyond the metaphysics of notions and metaphors, to search for cause and effect explanations of tangible problems, body complaints, and psychological and emotional damage experienced by contemporary women (such as eating disorders, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa). In her analyses, Bordo (1993: 113) uses the Foucaultian notion of *docile body* – the body that follows the ever changing and elusive ideal of femininity, the body that is constantly subject to discipline and normalisation, the body that is regulated and governed by the norms of cultural life. According to Bordo (1989: 13), the body cannot be treated only as a metaphor, “the body is not only a *text* of culture. It is also [...] a *practical*, direct locus of social control.” But, if it is a locus of control, it is also a locus of resistance. As the researcher sadly admits, though,

the pathologies of female protest function, paradoxically, as if in collusion with the cultural conditions that produce them, reproducing rather than transforming precisely that which is being protested. [...]. Female pathology reveals itself [...] as an extremely interesting social formation, through which one source of potential of resistance and rebellion is pressed into the service of maintaining the established order. (: 22)

Summing up, it is, therefore, crucial to explain, reinterpret and revalue bodies themselves and the bodies suffering from cultural pathologies. Women must regain their bodies and become more conscious of their female potential, which is unlikely to be entirely realised if defined in terms of and in the service of patriarchy, male institutions and economy.

3.12 Contemporary capitalism

Language and discourse may be considered in terms of a weapon. I purposefully come back to language and the linguistic dimension of discourse here, to emphasize once again the significance of the phenomenon that I am to investigate from the sociolinguistic perspective, as inescapably linguistically accompanied, and to emphasize the interrelated character of all of the previously mentioned elements in the mechanism of the beauty myth, together with the aspect of identity and all physically tangible and bodily experiences and matters.

To remind ourselves, therefore, as Lakoff (2000: 41) argues, “language is not *just words*. It enables us to establish our selves, and ourselves, as individuals and as members of groups; it tells us how we are connected to one another, who has power and who doesn't.” Language makes meaning and that is why it is worth fighting for - “*just language* has

become big business” (: 20). It serves power, it serves both politics and economy, it maintains male dominance intact, it establishes social structures and hierarchies.

Simultaneously, social constructions determine discourse at the societal and institutional levels. As Fairclough (1991: 31) maintains, “the way in which orders of discourse are structured, and the ideologies which they embody, are determined by relationships of power in particular social institutions, and in the society as a whole.”

Fairclough's (1991) critical considerations on discourse and power are the more crucial for the present dissertation because his analyses consider the general structural characteristics and main tendencies of modern Britain as a capitalist society. It is worth emphasizing that similar features expand and are also commonly observed in other capitalist societies comparable to the British.

A brief profile of a capitalist society and the property of consumerism that it entails will build a foundation for later considerations of the beauty myth as such, which phenomenon constitutes one of the gearwheels of the social-cultural (and also economic and political) machinery at the level of discourse.

First of all, as Fairclough (1991: 33) claims, in a society in which the capitalist class (or the *dominant bloc*, i.e. an alliance of capitalists and others who see their interests as tied to capital,” as the linguist calls it) dominates,

institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations. Practices which appear to be universal and commonsensical can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become *naturalized*. Where types of practice, and in many cases types of discourse, function in this way to sustain unequal power relations, [...] they are functioning *ideologically*. Ideological power, the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense', is a significant complement to economic and political power, and of particular significance here because it is exercised in discourse. (: 33)

According to Habermas's (1984: 361) investigations of contemporary capitalism, the tendency that can be observed and that shapes and consolidates the system as such in a capitalist society is as follows:

To the degree that the commodity form becomes the form of objectivity and rules the relations of individuals to one another as well as their dealings with external nature and with internal subjective nature, the lifeworld has to become reified and individuals degraded – as systems theory foresees – into an 'environment' for a society that has become external to them, that has consolidated for them into an opaque system, that has been abstracted from them and become independent of them.

Fairclough (1991: 197) explains Habermas's (1984) overall approach and adopts it and develops in his own theory. According to Fairclough's interpretation, therefore, Habermas's fundamental claim is that contemporary capitalism “is characterized by a degree of 'colonization' of people's lives by 'systems' that has reached crisis proportions” (: 197). The

'systems' that the scholar mentions equal money and power, and more specifically – the economy, the state as well as institutions. “In the form of *consumerism*, the economy and the commodity market have a massive and unremitting influence upon various aspects of life, most obviously through the medium of television and in advertising”, whereas “unprecedented state and institutional control (specifically by 'public' institutions) is exercised over individuals through various forms of bureaucracy” (: 197).

Fairclough's (1991: 197-198) suggestion is that the different forms of 'colonization' that people experience are “partly constituted by 'colonizations' in the societal order of discourse,” i.e. a specific structuring of constituent institutional orders of discourse. Particular structurings may be destructured by means of social struggle. The development of a capitalist society, must, therefore, have involved a destructuring process of previous societal orders of discourse, so that the tendencies mentioned before have been imposed in the course of such a struggle by the dominant bloc (capitalist in this case).

Consumerism, as an essential property of modern capitalism, “involves a shift in ideological focus from economic production to economic consumption, and an unprecedented level of impingement by the economy on people's lives” (Fairclough 1991: 199). The form in which it functions today has been shaped by multiple economic, technological and cultural conditions. *Economic conditions* refer to the development of commodity production in which it is possible to produce a huge variety of commodities in huge quantities, and to the state of the workforce in which wage levels of the majority of population allow them to meet subsistence expenses *and* still have some money to spare, and in which the number of working hours allows for more leisure time. The *technological condition* that has let consumerism flourish is the development of mass media – modern press, television, radio, film, and most recently computerisation and the Internet. As for the *cultural conditions*, as Fairclough claims,

capitalism, in the processes of industrialization and urbanization, has fractured traditional cultural ties associated with the extended family, the local or regional or ethnic community, religion, and so forth. In certain circumstances, these traditional ties have been replaced by ties generated by people in their new urban and industrial environments, notably ties of class. (: 200)

The latter has not always been the case, however. Lots of individuals experience the feeling of “loss or lack of a community: rootlessness, the loss of a sense of reality, uncertainty about one's own social identity” (Fairclough 1991: 200), which, in turn, has led to a considerable increase in therapeutic practice and discourse.

It is advertising, according to Fairclough (1991: 200-201), which is the most apparent practice and discourse of consumerism, probably as a result of the scale it attains. People are

constantly “exposed to massive daily injections of advertising”, as the linguist puts it, and it is due to this quantity that advertising can achieve its substantial qualitative effect, i.e. “the constitution of cultural communities to replace those which capitalism has destroyed, and which provide people with needs and values. Or *displace* rather than replace” (: 201). As Fairclough argues, “ersatz communities are offered as alternatives to real ones. These communities have been called *consumption communities*. The unprecedented degree of impingement of the economy on people's lives [...] consists in it” (: 201).

According to Featherstone's (1991: 170) considerations on the body in consumer culture, on the other hand, “the vast range of dietary, slimming, exercise and cosmetic body-maintenance products which are currently produced, marketed and sold point to the significance of appearance and bodily preservation within late capitalist society.” Cultural “encouragement” to reach for ideals, economic offer of inexhaustible possibilities and promise of amazing effects, and political lesson for the public against bodily neglect (to reduce health costs) are combined so as to make people believe the body is worth spending money on, for “the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression” (: 170).

As Featherstone (1991: 170-171) claims, images of beautiful bodies that are openly sexual, associated with pleasure, hedonism, leisure and display are responsible for greater concern with the body, appearance and the 'look'. Within consumer culture, appearance is very important. Advertisements, television and the popular press keep reminding us about that as well as about the cosmetic and surgical benefits of body maintenance. According to Featherstone,

the emphasis upon body maintenance and appearance within consumer culture suggests two basic categories: the inner and the outer body. The inner body refers to the concern with the health and optimum functioning of the body which demands maintenance and repair in the face of disease, abuse and the deterioration accompanying the aging process. The outer body refers to appearance as well as the movement and control of the body within social space. [...] Within consumer culture, the inner and the outer body become conjoined: the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body. (: 171)

Obviously, individuals can ignore or neglect appearance and body cultivation, yet they have to bear in mind the possible implications of such a decision and be prepared for consequences within socio-cultural encounters.

In conclusion, the personal problems that individuals may experience – identity crises, low self-esteem, the sense of loss and uncertainty, plus serious psychosomatic disorders such as depression, anorexia, or bulimia – are to a large extent the result of the impingements of the economy, the state and culture upon people's lives. Trapped in the mechanism of this system, people search for help of various kind, ranging from newspaper problem columns or

magazine articles to counselling or therapy. They are then doubly trapped, however, for this is yet another business.

3.13 Beauty myth in contemporary culture and discourse

What does the process of adjustment of an individual body to the requirements of gender look like? In what way is this process reproduced through the body? What aspects of individuals' lives does it concern? The contemporary discourses concerning the body and the code of gendered gestures that females and males are supposed to acquire shape their subjective bodies in accord with the necessities of modern consumerist societies. Bodies constitute the core of the shaping of their female and male identities.

The beauty myth presupposes the existence of images of beauty (as broadly understood) that are used against individuals, especially women. According to Wolf (1991: 12),

The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called 'beauty' objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women's beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless. None of this is true. 'Beauty' is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves.

Beauty is neither universal or changeless, nor is it a function of evolution, nor has the beauty myth always been the same. There is no biological or historical justification for it since what the beauty myth is doing to contemporary women is a result of the need of today's structure of power, economy and culture "to mount a counteroffensive against women" (Wolf 1991: 13).

According to Wolf's (1991 : 13) diagnosis, the beauty myth "claims to be about intimacy and sex and life, a celebration of women," but "it is actually composed of emotional distance, politics, finance, and sexual repression." It is, therefore, not about women at all, but about male institutions as well as institutional power. In other words, as the feminist claims, "the qualities that a given period calls beautiful in women are merely symbols of the female behaviour that that period considers desirable: *The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance*" (: 13-14). The behaviour must be beneficial for the economy, politics and power relations, and the established social order. In the economy, women's (and

men's) behaviours as consumers are essential to the development of contemporary industrial society. This is why the behaviours, the social practices that individuals are involved in, and which apparently are destroying them physically and psychologically, are, for purely economic reasons, transformed into social virtues. They are literally profitable.

The beauty myth governs female bodies and, through the bodies, it controls every single aspect of their lives. The beauty myth manifests itself in the fields of work, culture, religion, sex, home, health and so forth, giving an illusive impression that the ideal is achievable. The beauty myth embraces an incredibly wide range of phenomena – the professional beauty qualification, (un)dress code and fashion industry, beauty advertising, sexual harassment, verbal and physical sexual abuse, age and physical discrimination, beauty pornography, beauty sadomasochism, a suppression of women's true sexuality, the weight-control cult, the business of dieting, fitness, body-building, cosmetic industry, cosmetic and sexual surgery, the beauty and well-being industry, psychological and psychosomatic disorders, anorexia and bulimia, or the industry of counselling are only some of them.

What Wolf (1991: 272), however, really criticizes is the lack of choice: “the real issue has nothing to do with whether women wear makeup or don't, gain weight or lose it, have surgery or shun it, dress up or down, make our clothing and faces and bodies into works of art or ignore adornment altogether. *The real problem is our lack of choice.*” Another problem is that the beauty myth makes women confront a false and imposed dilemma – to either be sexual or serious. Although Wolf realizes all the painful consequences the beauty myth entails and describes the deceitful mechanism of the beauty myth in great detail, she concludes with an optimistic remark that it is possible to “dissolve the myth and survive it with sex, love, attraction, and style not only intact, but flourishing more vibrantly than before” (: 271). She does not mean to attack anything that makes women good, only what deliberately makes them feel bad.

How to win with the beauty myth? According to Wolf (1991: 289-290),

We do not need to change our bodies, we need to change the rules. Beyond the myth, women will still be blamed for our appearances by whomever needs to blame us. So let's stop blaming ourselves and stop running and stop apologizing, and let's start to please ourselves once and for all. The 'beautiful' woman does not win under the myth; neither does anyone else. The woman who is subjected to the continual adulation of strangers does not win, nor does the woman who denies herself attention. The woman who wears a uniform does not win, nor does the woman with a designer outfit for every day of the year. You do not win by struggling to the top of a caste system, you win by refusing to be trapped within one at all. The woman wins who calls herself beautiful and challenges the world to change to truly see her.

A woman wins by giving herself and other women permission – to eat; to be sexual; to age; to wear overalls, a paste tiara, a Balenciaga gown, a second-hand opera cloak, or combat boots; to cover up or to go practically naked; to do whatever we choose in following – or ignoring – our own aesthetic. A woman wins when she feels that what each woman does with her own body – unforced, uncoerced – is her own business. When many individual women exempt themselves

from the economy, it will begin to dissolve. Institutions, some men, and some women, will continue to try to use women's appearance against us. But we won't bite.

Beauty has to be redefined so that it is pro-woman and woman-loving. Women have to interpret beauty *by* and *for* themselves. They have to let themselves truly live. In pleasure, not in pain. They have to let themselves eat, drink, wear and behave how they feel. They have to let themselves be sexual. They have to let other women make their own choices and tolerate them. They have to love themselves and their bodies, for “in a sensual politics, female is beautiful” (Wolf 1991: 291).

Tseëlon (1995: 79), citing a number of analyses as reference⁴⁷, claims that when it comes to social consequences of being or not being attractive, i.e. beautiful in the way that well fits the established appearance standard,

ample empirical evidence confirms that in research hypothetical attractive people (adults and children) are preferred as friends, and are perceived as more competent. Attractiveness is associated with better professional outcomes, while lack of attractiveness is related to perceptions of social deviance. There is also evidence that appearance is emphasized and valued more highly in females than in males. The interpersonal consequences of physical attractiveness are unequivocally stronger for women. Women are more critically judged for attractiveness, and more severely rejected when they lack it, and these judgements have real consequences for them.

Women are primarily judged from the angle of their appearance, which contributes to the level of their self-esteem, the way they perceive themselves in relation to other women and in relation to men, their psychic condition, general physical and mental state and sense of femininity. The evaluation of their selves and the underestimation of their value as individuals, as based upon severely critical, fundamentally unreasonable and unfair judgements, may lead to identity crises and a sense of loss. It has been empirically proved that “women have a lower body image than men [...], lower body satisfaction [...], that for women body image is related to psychological health [...], romantic relationships [...], and femininity [...] both experienced and perceived by others” (Tseëlon 1995: 79).

This deadlock poses a number of apparent paradoxes. First of all, women are placed in a no-win position from the start – the ideal can never be reached. The paradox of preserving female beauty works against women: “however fast she runs in an attempt to control her body, the woman can never confidently master it” (Tseëlon 1995: 80). Since women are continuously made to feel insecure about their body and physical attractiveness, they are more likely to involve themselves in improving their appearance and fighting the process of aging through dieting, unnecessary and dangerous surgeries, etc. If a woman refuses to fit the

⁴⁷ I do not cite all the research that Tseëlon refers to by names of the scholars who have conducted the analyses. I would like to mention, however, that the reference is quite impressive and anyone interested in the field can look for it in Tseëlon's (1995) publication.

prevailing model of femininity, she is defined as inadequately accommodated to cultural and gender requirements; if she manages to fit adequately, she is perceived as narcissistic and immature. Furthermore, the paradox implies that neither the standard of female beauty nor natural beauty are authentic – if she attempts to adjust to the requirements, the effects that she achieves are considered as artificial and fake; if she decides to be natural, she must make a great effort to control herself. If a woman takes control over her body, she is in fact deprived of real power over it. Secondly, the stigma associated with being unattractive works as a self-fulfilling prophecy, which has indeed been demonstrated in various research: “the *physically* (un)attractive learn to play the role of the *socially* (un)attractive” (: 79). Thirdly, as Tseëlon highlights, “psychological theories serve the seal of legitimacy on the ideology of 'fitting in' with the norms (of gender construction) by providing a rationale for the psychological benefits of complying” (: 79). According to the scholar, “research on physical attractiveness heavily documented the cognitive developmental basis of appearance stereotyping, the personal characteristics, and the social advantages of being attractive [...]. Only occasionally have researchers studied the negative consequences of attractiveness” (: 83). According to the latter examples of research, however, beautiful women can be perceived as intimidating or egoistic. As Tseëlon notices, sometimes they are found “to suffer from 'visible handicap'” (: 83). In the same fashion, on traits that connote vanity and self-centredness, attractive individuals are rated less positively than unattractive ones.

Finally, once again let me emphasize the relationship between the body and female identity. As Kaschack (1996: 69-97) claims, female identity is shaped upon a handful of elements, one of which is corporeality. It is the body, in fact, that constitutes the core. The process starts at birth. Girls have to learn and acquire the body rules. In the process of socialisation, female children and teenage girls are made to believe that being attractive and sexy pays more, that being the ones to be looked at is their destiny, that without beauty built upon red lipstick and high-heels they are valueless. Everybody watches them indeed – both men and women – and everybody judges. According to scholar, women identify with a nondescript observer, i.e. the masculine context of culture, which determines their ambivalent experience and the expression of their bodies. Since the body is essential, it needs acceptance. Self-acceptance relies on how a woman is perceived by others and on what she herself can see during everyday rituals in front of a mirror. Kaschack also points to beauty as being tangled up in paradoxes. A false dilemma that women encounter is that they have to choose between the body or intelligence and reason, being considered pretty or being considered serious, while a handsome man can still be perceived as solemn and sensible. A problem is that when

a woman loses attractiveness, she loses a considerable part of her identity. Nonetheless, the effort that is devoted to maintaining beauty is essentially superficial.

In the social and cultural context of patriarchal reality, women are, according to Kaschack (1996: 88-89), deprived of the right to a complete experience of their bodies and corporeality, and women themselves learn not to allow the physical aspect of their existence to come to the fore:

Being a woman means living in the world of mirror reflections, though these are not ordinary mirrors. Perhaps it would be better to use a metaphor of a prism which decomposes a woman – such as light of various frequencies – into constituent parts. Only these parts and features are reflected once more which a masculine society and individual men recognise as important: that is what is used to evaluate attractiveness and femininity. The image of a woman comes back to her as evaluated and contextualised, that is distorted. Some parts of the varied and compound whole become divided into fragments, others cease to be visible. In the mirror, a woman sees how her size, shape, race or age diverge from the ideal.⁴⁸

As for female identity, Eichelberger (1997) emphasises an inextricable connection between the body and sexuality. Women who come to psychotherapy, in fact, want to reclaim their bodies, their identities and their human dignity. Confronted with yet another false dilemma imposed on them by patriarchal culture, women experience a sense of guilt, shame or disgrace on regular, daily basis. The dilemma that women are faced with prevents them from realising their whole female potential. They allegedly must choose whether to embody a saint, a siren or a harlot. From a psychological point of view, nevertheless, the three are in an identical situation, for, though an appearance of choice might be maintained, in fact there is no choice. These are only three ways of coping with the same deficit, of coping with the same wound.

Women search for positive patterns of femininity. Those defined by masculine culture do not allow them to truly flourish and realise their female potential. Women have to reclaim and regain their bodies, their sexuality, their identity. They must be the ones to decide about their bodies and their fate without any shame or guilt.

3.14 Summary

The phenomenon of woman-body-identity relationship in a socio-cultural context and within the topic of the beauty myth, including its economic and political dimensions, is vast. Only a

⁴⁸ “Być kobietą oznacza żyć w świecie lustrzanych odbić, choć nie są to lustra zwyczajne. Może lepiej byłoby posłużyć się metaforą pryzmatu, który rozszczepia kobietę – jak światło o różnych częstotliwościach – na części składowe. Ponownie odbite zostają tylko te części i cechy, które maskulinistyczne społeczeństwo oraz indywidualni mężczyźni uznają za ważne: a więc to, co służy do oceny atrakcyjności i kobiecości. Obraz kobiety powraca do niej oceniony i ukontekstualizowany, to znaczy zniekształcony. Niektóre części urozmaiconej i złożonej całości zostają rozbite na fragmenty, inne przestają być widoczne. W lustrze kobieta widzi, jak daleko od ideału odbiegają jej wymiary, kształty, rasa czy wiek.”; translation mine.

small fragment of the evidence can be recited in the brief space allowed here. Hopefully, it will prove convincing enough to demonstrate the scale of the problem and to prove the importance of the issues.

A fundamental theoretical claim in the present chapter is that the personal and the social depend on each other. Individuals and a society as a whole are interrelated. Their social and cultural context determines the lives of individuals to a comparable extent as their daily practices create and reinforce that context.

As a crucial factor in social and cultural constructions, gender determines the way that males and females perceive themselves in relation to others. Archetypes and stereotypes serve to establish and maintain the symbolic binary opposition and the power relation between women and men in patriarchal culture, as well as what is immediately associated with them – their personalities, social roles, behaviour or appearance. The concepts of femininity and masculinity provide conventional standards. These obviously evolve and change in a diachronic manner: they have not always been the same. Contemporary masculinity/femininity concepts, however, the subject matter here, have been shaped to a great extent in accordance with the economic and political needs of a consumerist society. Consumerism creates a perfect environment for the beauty myth, which phenomenon afflicts women most severely and painfully, and, unfortunately, literally. The female body may suffer from low self-esteem or depression, it may suffer from anorexia or bulimia, it may suffer from the pain during and after cosmetic or surgical beauty treatments. The body suffers a lot; and so does female identity. In this situation, it is essential for women to reclaim and redefine the notion of femininity and the notion of beauty. Representatives of various scientific fields, and especially feminists, attempt to raise awareness of the issues and provoke a social debate on the destructive potential of the described phenomena.

It must be pointed out that in the present dissertation, some theoretical points have been omitted, even though they would provide further points of reference and explanation to the subject matter. I have decided, for instance, to concentrate more on the feminist perspectives as such than on the ideas of Lacan, Derrida or Deleuze on which they are based. Foucault's work, more exhaustively discussed in the first chapter, is an exception here – corporeal feminists have, indeed, been influenced to a great extent by his theories, but the attention that he receives in this thesis results also from the fact that his considerations have become part of the theory of discourse – the core and bonding issue of the present dissertation. One of the most significant of Foucault's assumptions which the feminist theory has adopted is that the body constitutes a specific field of influence of power and discourse.

I remain fairly silent on the matter of specific stages of and issues related to the process of socialisation, as determined by gender, such as, for example, the constitution of the *self*, the concept of the *self* as opposed to *the other*, the concepts of the *significant other*, and the *role-specific significant other* in relation to the development of male and female selves⁴⁹, or the issue of gender differentiation from the moment of birth, toys and play, or education in the gender-specific development of individuals. I do not go into detail on the issues of medicalisation, cosmeticisation, dieting, body-building, or the influence of clothing and other attributes as a gender difference indication. This relative silence on the subjects is by no means intended to diminish their importance. On the contrary, the very fact of being so broadly investigated and described in scientific literature proves their significance. Yet, I allowed myself to omit these so that I could focus on the issues that, I believe, shed better and more sufficient light on the matters in question. I also realise the generalisations that I use and that may prompt criticism, as some of the theories cited above. Still, hopefully, the research chapters provide more specific information that allows me to speak in more specific terms.

⁴⁹ These issues are discussed in detail in Mead (1975).

CHAPTER FOUR

Research design

The present chapter provides a general research design. It primarily enumerates specific research aims, introduces basic assumptions and outlines research procedures. It also gives reasons and justifications for choosing the particular research material – the corpus consisting of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

4.1 Research aims

The fundamental research aim is to investigate the beauty myth as a discourse phenomenon, as exemplified by *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, and to respond to it critically. However, this is done in several stages.

The texts serve as material for a quantitative analysis that is to provide a set of statistical data for qualitative investigations. A general content analysis of the horoscopes precedes the more precise analyses that focus on lexical and grammatical features. The texts are analysed in terms of their generic characteristics – register, style, or structures that realise the actual transfer of their content. Additionally, as one of the characteristics of horoscopes as a specific genre, the language of success is given attention. The language of success is important for the study because it is a fundamental building block of horoscopes. It is the language of success that the generic structure is actually based on. Horoscopes are, in fact, built of the language of success. And it is due to this characteristics that it can be claimed that the generic structure of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes realises the beauty myth.

It has to be emphasised, however, that in accordance with the assumption that discourse analysis involves an analysis of both text and context, the latter is also subject to investigations. By context, I mean the immediate one, i.e. what actually surrounds the individual texts; in other words, what the web page in question contains. The content of the horoscopes is also discussed with reference to a much broader context – the socio-cultural context of a consumerist society with a patriarchal background. The same material is to serve as evidence and illustration of the phenomenon of the beauty myth. In accord with the theory

of Critical Discourse Analysis, the horoscopolical discourse is later approached with critical reservation.

The research aims, therefore, embrace a quantitative analysis of the corpus to provide a statistical basis for qualitative analyses, a socio-linguistic discourse analysis to find out the tendencies of representations of reality, especially in terms of the beauty myth and the construction of female identity, and by so doing, to increase individual and social awareness of the phenomenon and its scope, and a critical discourse analysis to investigate the relations between the beauty myth and social practices, between social-cultural processes and individual experiences and practices of women, and to provoke a debate over the impact of the discourse of the beauty myth, as exemplified and promoted by *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

Hopefully, a thorough analysis of the beauty myth as a discourse phenomenon manifested in the entire research material will allow me to reveal its true intentions, to illustrate its functioning in socio-linguistic terms, and to expose its ideological instigations as well as political and economic foundations. In other words, the basic intention is to find out how the discourse in question reflects the hierarchy of values, power relations, knowledge and beliefs of the social community in which it is realised. I intend to reveal that what is seemingly natural is only an artificial creation of the beauty myth whose functioning assumes the realisation of political and economic aims in the first place.

4.2 Research characteristics and assumptions

The analysis conducted in the present dissertation has the character of a critical analysis of discourse and myth as a discursive phenomenon. Critical remarks, though necessarily bearing the hallmarks of subjectivity, are made after thorough quantitative and qualitative investigations. Critical discourse analysis assumes an analysis of discourse in order to raise important issues and attempt at social change, rather than a description only of matters. In this sense, critical discourse analysis finds an actual practical application. Research outcomes may provoke further discussion or research, or else a factual change in social mentality and reality by exposing the artificiality and intentionality of what seemingly natural and inevitable.

This general characteristic already indicates some basic assumptions. Firstly, discourse is a social phenomenon and contributes to the social reality at an individual and collective level. Secondly, myth is a discourse phenomenon, which fact, by analogy, entails the assumption that myth plays an important role in social constructions. The analysis of the discourse of the beauty myth may, therefore, reveal the social hierarchies of aims and values,

power relations, common knowledge and beliefs within the consumerist society in which the discourse is realised.

In the present dissertation, myth is a type speech. Myth is, therefore, discourse as well. The phenomena not only overlap, but may also be considered as analogical, synonymous in a sense, and used almost interchangeably. Such reasoning leads to the assumption that the discourse analysis conducted here is simultaneously and inevitably, in fact, myth analysis from the very beginning to the very end. The content of the myth, its meaning and its intention function in and affect reality through speech, and through discourse by analogy. Yet, a reminder – the process is undergone in two directions: myth affects reality through speech and discourse on the one hand, and it is created, shaped and maintained through discourse, on the other.

In consumerist culture in which societal and individual needs are artificially generated to sustain consumptionist order, myth manifests itself in various areas and takes different forms. Most obviously and daringly, it shows in media discourse, advertising, popular press. It is no novelty to say that contemporary people are constantly being bombarded by images of beauty myth, images that are visual or described in words, enacted in everyday life. The images stubbornly pervade the life of individuals, offering promises and creating hopes for beauty, success and happiness. The beauty myth does, indeed, manifest itself through the language of success which is ideals and success oriented, which tempts with an illusion of accessibility, immediateness or else exceptionality.

The beauty myth is not only physical beauty, however. It is much more. The body is of crucial importance, but in this dissertation its meaning is very broad, by no means restricted to physicality and appearance. The body is both individual and social. It is both bodily and mental. It is both created and creative. The body is and does. Things are done to it. It affects and is affected since it exists in a system. There is a constant mutual relationship. Individuals exist in a particular system of meanings and relationships. The meanings carried by the beauty myth affect primarily the way individuals behave. The beauty myth affects the way individuals perceive themselves and others, the way they act in communicative situations, the roles they take. The beauty myth has a very wide scope. Though it does not exclude men, for after all they exist and function in the same system of meanings, it is women that are of major focus here. Therefore, the beauty myth is assumed to be understood as a concept which defines femininity as a whole. The beauty myth makes women attempt to fulfil a particular standard of femininity, but the shape and look of the body is only part of the story. A whole range of features and aspects that the beauty myth embraces includes, among others, the

social roles that women are to enact, the social and family status they are expected to stick to, or the stereotypical images and patterns of behaviour they are to follow and embody. The beauty myth concerns women as individuals embedded in a particular economic and political situation, in which it proves beneficial to economy and politics to make them feel insecure and uncertain with who they are, what they look like or what they do. The beauty myth enforces the continuous reenactment of established meanings, which, undoubtedly, influences the shaping of feminine identity at an individual and social level.

4.3 Research procedures

The analysis is divided into three main parts. The first one studies the discursive dimension of the beauty myth. The subsequent one focuses on the axiological dimension of the beauty myth. In the third one, the author summarises the tendencies discussed and the observations made in the previous chapters, and creates a prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope as well as presents her own interpretation of the mechanism of the beauty myth. The entire study proceeds in several stages described below.

Stage 1 is a discourse analysis which begins with a content analysis of the corpus. The content of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes is discussed with reference to the classes of topics that may occur in horoscopes as such. In order to conduct this analysis, Pisarkowa's (1978) typology concerning classes of topics of everyday talk is applied, though slightly altered for the needs of the research. To a large extent, this part discusses the horoscopolical register which allows the discovery of tendencies in the construction of the linguistic picture of a *Cosmopolitan* woman. To some degree, it also constitutes a genre analysis in terms of indicators of horoscope content.

Stage 2, on the other hand, involves the study of typical indicators of horoscopolical form. This quantitative analysis shows the characteristics of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in terms of length, density or readability parameters not only as generic features, but also to show their possible correspondence to the needs of the discourse community. The counting is done by the author and with the use of online text analysis tools, and to a large extent only supplements and supports the preceding part which already consists to a great extent of statistics.

Stage 3 of the research concentrates on other key aspects of the discourse in question. This part begins with a brief profile of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine, as it is advertised, and, then, discusses the *Cosmopolitan* discourse community as well as the context as an essential

component of discourse. These aspects are analysed in accord with Cook's (1992: 2) idea that, to cite it once more, "discourse is text and context together, interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by the participants [...]." Ignoring either of these elements – context or participants – would make the analysis of horoscopolical discourse incomplete. Yet another aspect discussed here is the use of women's language as one of the characteristics of the discourse in question and a possible contribution to approaching and persuading the targeted audience.

Stage 4 of the research concentrates on the language of success investigated according to Wolny-Peirs's (2005) typology of its features. Such an analysis not only discusses one further generic feature of horoscopes, but, more importantly, reveals how the discourse of success and happiness may serve the beauty myth. By extension, the study reveals how the horoscopolical discourse serves the beauty myth.

The second research part is devoted to the beauty myth and explores the phenomenon in relation to values, stereotypes, body and identity. The considerations inspired by Wolf's (1991) study of the beauty myth are approached from a socio-linguistic perspective which essentially uses Barthes's (1991) theory, of myth as a type of speech, as a theoretical framework determining the investigation.

Stage 5 of the analysis, therefore, begins with a discussion of major concepts that reoccur in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in terms of positive values, though distorted by the myth. An attempt is made at revealing the mechanism of the beauty myth, aimed at creating false assumptions and convictions.

Stage 6 intends to expose some of the gender stereotypes which are hidden within the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes and speculate what their contribution to the success of the beauty myth might be.

Stage 7 involves the discussion of two concepts which are strongly interrelated. These are the concept of the body and the concept of identity. The author attempts to explain how the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes (as a representation of the whole *Cosmopolitan* ideology) contributes to the process of body and identity construction, according to the intentions of the beauty myth.

Stage 8 of the research part is an attempt to create a model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope that might serve as a prototype. This is intended to constitute a specific summary of the observations made in previous chapters. The discussion of the model horoscope is, simultaneously, an introduction to the last stage of the research part, since, apart from

incorporating essential lexical, stylistic or structural features, the model horoscope is expected to be the most prominent representation of the discourse of the beauty myth.

Stage 9 involves the author's own interpretation of the mechanism of the beauty myth. To demonstrate this mechanism, she uses Puzynina's (1991; 1992) concept of the language of values and Barthes's (1991) theory of myth as a type of speech.

The research chapters are followed with conclusions and critical comments.

4.4 Why horoscopes

First of all, horoscopes are not that evident as texts of manipulative nature, certainly not to the same extent as advertisements, for example. At first sight, horoscopes appear less likely to be a persuasive device in the hands of the beauty myth than are catchy slogans pinned to beautiful faces, luxurious products or glittering attributes of success. Secondly, horoscopes seem innocent, since they are not intended to be taken seriously. They serve only as light entertainment. At least, this is what most sceptic horoscope lovers maintain.

What makes horoscopes an interesting field of research is, therefore, their deceptive innocence. But this is not the only reason. In considerations of persuasive dimensions of discourse, horoscopes are also interesting for the Pygmalion effect that their functioning involves – individuals may seek confirmation of their expectations in apparently innocent horoscopical content. After all, there has been research (mentioned in the subchapter devoted to horoscopes) that confirmed the persuasive character of horoscopes used to intentionally influence individuals' everyday practices. Economic and market considerations appear to be a good and sufficient reason to incorporate persuasive messages wherever it is possible so as to accomplish the premises of the beauty myth. Indeed, the reason is good enough to incorporate the manipulative messages even in inconspicuous horoscopes.

Of course, one needs to know the content of the horoscopes in question to claim that they accompany and favour the spread and maintenance of the beauty myth. If and how horoscopes do this can be demonstrated with the use of social-linguistic theory. Another doubt concerns the actual influence on individual females. Is, for example, horoscopical encouragement to buy a new lipstick to cheer oneself up enough for a woman to take the actual action of buying one? Is a suggestion to take care of one's health enough for a woman to do a workout? In fact, the latter concern exceeds the scope of the present research. It is not the author's intention to analyse consumptionist behaviour as such, only to illustrate how

specific behaviour of individuals and masses can be determined and obtained, and how the research material may serve the beauty myth.

The horoscopes are assumed to serve the beauty myth for their specificity as a genre and a text of success, for their specificity which involves a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism, and for the specificity of the context in which they appear. Within their concise form, horoscopes treat with future actions, these to be taken to achieve better life, success and happiness. From a psychological point of view, horoscopes are based on a mechanism that involves positive feedback between a certain belief (in this case, what has been suggested by an astrologer or the stars) and behaviour – only a prediction of something will evoke the behaviour which may directly or indirectly make the original prediction come true. Enhanced by the context in which they appear, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes may well be assumed to serve the beauty myth.

Another reservation should be voiced about the homogeneity of the corpus. The source is, indeed, homogeneous. However, it is not analysed in isolation. The discourse analysis involves a comprehensive investigation of both text and context. *Cosmopolitan* magazine, as one of the best-selling contemporary printed magazines worldwide, and additionally having multiple Internet editions, seems to be the best choice, taking into consideration its scope and the impact that it has had on female mass culture. *Cosmopolitan* is one of many similar magazines, but its long and inspiring history makes it a good representative. And why such a trivialised source at all? For, as Wolf (1991: 70) maintains, “though the magazines are trivialized, they represent something very important: women's mass culture. A woman's magazine is not just a magazine.” It is woman-oriented mass culture. Still, I can find here yet one more threat – is a woman-oriented culture necessarily a woman-friendly culture?

4.5 Why *Cosmopolitan*

There is good reason why the author has decided on *Cosmopolitan* to serve as a source for text material.

To begin with, the popular meaning of the word *cosmopolitan*, and the meaning it has acquired – what it means to be cosmopolitan in a modern sense – serving as a title of an international women's magazine published and read worldwide resembles a word puzzle and seems to reveal an interesting socio-linguistic, or discourse, phenomenon. Secondly, and most importantly, this very magazine, which used to pave the way for reclaimed femininity, women's ambitious advances and sexual revolution, and which has always stubbornly claimed

to be pro-women, has, with the passing of time, turned scarily into a force at the service of the beauty myth and is now successfully working against women.

As for the word *cosmopolitan* itself, its etymology indicates the meaning of “a citizen of the world” (Partridge 2006: 2479). Popular dictionaries provide a number of definitions, such as the following: according to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995: 310), “a cosmopolitan place consists of people from many different parts of the world” and “a cosmopolitan person, belief, opinion etc. shows a wide experience of different people and places”; the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (1969) defines the adjective as “pertinent or common to the whole world,” or “having constituent elements from all over the world or from many different parts of the world,” or “so sophisticated as to be at home in all parts of the world,” or “growing or occurring in many parts of the world; widely distributed”; *Collins English Dictionary* (2003) defines the term *cosmopolitan* as “having interest in or familiar with many parts of the world,” or as “sophisticated or urbane,” or “composed of people or elements from all parts of the world or from many different spheres,” or speaking of plants and animals as “widely distributed” [WWW₂₇]; whereas *Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary* (2010) defines the word as either “belonging to all the world; not limited to the politics, interests, or prejudices of one part of the world,” or “of or characteristic of a cosmopolite; worldly; sophisticated,” or else with reference to biology as “widely distributed over the globe” [WWW₂₇]; yet another online source suggests one of the meanings of *cosmopolitan* as “free from local, provincial, or national ideas, prejudices or attachments; at home all over the world” [WWW₂].

All of the definitions seem to have a common denominator which can be well rendered within several synonymous expressions. The synonyms that are most often cited in various thesaurus dictionaries either indicate a global or universal character (eg. *worldwide*, *international*, *global* or *universal*), or else indicate the knowledge of the world, openness to the new, experience and tolerance (e.g. *worldly*, *world-wise*, *broad-minded*, *open-minded*, *urbane*, *sophisticated*, *cultured*, *refined*, *well-travelled*, *cultivated* or *public*), whereas the antonyms could be the following words: *unsophisticated*, *limited*, *restricted*, *narrow-minded*, *unrefined*, *provincial*, *particular*, *specific*, *parochial*, *insular*, *rustic*, *illiberal* or *hidebound* [WWW₃; WWW₄; WWW₅; WWW₆; WWW₇; WWW₈].

Cosmopolitan, therefore, connotes something intensely promoted and positively valued in modern consumerist societies. *Cosmopolitan* as an international magazine serves as a meeting place for women from all over the globe. For those women who are brave enough to face the challenges of the world, who are curious, open and emancipated. For those who

know their worth and beauty, who aspire to draw extensively from what every single day offers, who are not afraid to take risks or express their sexuality, who recognise their female potential. *Cosmopolitan* offers them freshness, beauty and sophistication enclosed in one only word. Who would not like to be truly cosmopolitan in this modern, improved sense? This promise of beautiful life is, however, deceptive.

As compared to men's magazines, women's magazines are often ridiculed for their trivial content and the overall editorial tone. Women themselves often feel “ambivalent about the pleasure mixed up with anxiety that they provide” (Wolf 1991: 62) perhaps because they realise, at least intuitively, that the magazines in question let the worst aspects of the beauty myth be transmitted so daringly. According to Wolf, “women's magazines accompanied women's advances and the simultaneous evolution of the beauty myth” (: 62). The feminist claims that “women's magazines for over a century have been one of the most powerful agents for changing women's roles, and throughout that time – today more than ever – they have consistently glamorized whatever the economy, their advertisers, and, during wartime, the government, needed at that moment from women” (: 64). Whatever their expected role in society, women have always had to be perfect. However, the definition of perfection changes its content according to the changing needs of employers, politicians and advertisers. Nowadays, modern magazines tend to focus most extensively on beauty work and the body rather than on housework. As Wolf explains,

When the restless, isolated, bored, and insecure housewife fled the Feminine Mystique for the workplace, advertisers faced the loss of their primary consumer. How to make sure that busy, stimulated working women would keep consuming at the levels they had done when they had all day to do so and little else of interest to occupy them? A new ideology was necessary that would compel the same insecure consumerism; that ideology must be, unlike that of the Feminine Mystique, a briefcase-sized neurosis that the working woman could take with her to the office. To paraphrase Friedan, why is it never said that the really crucial function that women serve as aspiring beauties is *to buy more things for the body*? Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that they will buy more things if they are kept in the self-hating, ever-failing, hungry, and sexually insecure state of being aspiring 'beauties.' (: 66)

This means that the cultivation of the body that the beauty myth enforces is to serve the same function as the Friedan's cultivation of domesticity⁵⁰. Feminine mystique has been replaced with the beauty myth in a modern form, and the transition has been to a great extent

⁵⁰ The fragment that Wolf (1991: 66) paraphrases and modifies comes from Friedan (1963: 197) and goes as follows: “Why is it never said that the really crucial function, the really important role that women serve as housewives is *to buy more things for the house*? In all the talk of femininity and woman's role, one forgets that the real business of America is business. But the perpetuation of housewifery, the growth of the feminine mystique, makes sense (and dollars) when one realizes that women are the chief customers of American business. Somehow, somewhere, someone must have figured out that women will buy more things if they are kept in the underused, nameless-yearning, energy-to-get-rid-of state of being housewives.” According to Friedan, it is through the buying of things that women are given a sense of “identity, purpose, creativity, the self-realization, even the sexual joy they lack” (: 199).

enforced by advertising in women's magazines. Women are now slaves of the beauty myth.

How does the beauty industry achieve this? Wolf's theory is as follows:

An economy that depends on slavery needs to promote images of slaves that 'justify' the institution of slavery. Western economies are absolutely dependent now on the continued underpayment of women. An ideology that makes women feel 'worth less' was urgently needed to counteract the way feminism had begun to make us feel worth more. This does not require a conspiracy; merely an atmosphere. The contemporary economy depends right now on the representation of women within the beauty myth. [...] As soon as a woman's primary social value could no longer be defined as the attainment of virtuous domesticity, the beauty myth redefined it as the attainment of virtuous beauty. It did so to substitute both a new consumer imperative and a new justification for economic unfairness in the workplace where the old ones had lost their hold over newly liberated women. (: 18)

However, to return to *Cosmopolitan* (which is one of the oldest mass circulation magazines in print in the United States and which originated as a literary family magazine entitled *The Cosmopolitan*, by the way, first launched in 1886 by Schlicht & Field of New York), when it was first launched in a fresh formula in 1965 immediately after Helen Gurley Brown became chief editor, remodelled and reinvented as a magazine for modern independent career women, it was truly revolutionary. From then on, as Wolf argues, the *Cosmopolitan* formula has included a lot of seemingly pro-woman content:

an aspirational, individualist, can-do tone that says that you should be your best and nothing should get in your way; a focus on personal and sexual relationships that affirms female ambition and erotic appetite; and sexualized images of female models that, though only slightly subtler than those aimed at men, are meant to convey female sexual liberation. But the formula must also include an element that contradicts and then undermines the overall prowoman fare: In diet, skin care, and surgery features, it sells women the deadliest version of the beauty myth money can buy. (: 69)

A dosage of the beauty myth seems obligatory. Women do not separate the pro-woman content from the beauty myth that works against them, and constitutes an enormous part of the magazine content for purely economic reason. They are deeply affected by the entirety of it, even though they may see much of it is trivial. This is because women live in a culture in which they have learned they are continually being watched and judged on their appearance. This is because the magazines represent the mass culture to which women belong. This is because beauty and adornment have been part of female culture for centuries. This is because, even though they may realise the beauty myth's trap, they want to sympathise with other females who may not even be their friends, but who become united in common interests, priorities, worldview or values. Paradoxically or not, it is all of this which makes the beauty myth so powerful and persistent.

Nowadays, the *Cosmopolitan* monthly published by *Hearst Magazines*, apart from an enormous load of advertisements and beauty images, includes articles concerning "women's issues" and features topics including relationships, men and love, sex, beauty and fashion,

health and fitness, careers, money and self-improvement, entertainment and celebrities. It claims to be a bible for fun, fearless females and is now one of the best-selling women's magazines in the United States, where its audience reaches more than 17 million readers a month. Still more view the online edition on cosmopolitan.com (20 million per month) plus 5 million Facebook fans and one million Twitter followers. All around the world, *Cosmopolitan* now publishes 61 magazine editions in print, including the Cosmopolitan for Latinas edition which is published in the United States five times a year. [WWW₉]

Cosmopolitan may claim it is pro-woman. But it serves the beauty myth more than ever before, offering a beautiful apple whose poisonous bite does not, in the end, taste and feel as sweet and pleasurable as it looks. Unfortunately, for all the reasons listed above, and perhaps more, women in large numbers respond to the beauty myth in exactly the way they are expected to. Finally, to play with words once again, contemporarily, thanks to technology advancement, the scope of *Cosmopolitan* has become even more *cosmopolitan*, since it is available online.

4.6 Cosmopolitan's self-advertising – a general profile of the magazine

The magazine targets a specific type of audience which includes primarily single, white, upper-middle class women aged between 18 and 35. The publication is also aimed at heterosexuals. Even though *Cosmopolitan* engages models of different ethnicities and claims that it treasures and promotes diversity and individuality, it, nonetheless, seems to give priority to Caucasian females, which fact can be observed on the example of *Cosmopolitan* covers discussed later in the thesis.

Cosmopolitan advertises itself as follows:

COSMOPOLITAN is the lifestyle – and cheerleader – for millions of fun, fearless females who want to be the best they can in every area of their lives.

Cosmo edit inspires with information on relationships and romance, the best fashion and beauty, the latest on women's health and well-being, as well as what's happening in pop culture and entertainment ... and just about everything else fun, fearless females want to know about.

The best-selling magazine in its category, Cosmo has 64 international editions, is published in 35 languages and is distributed in more than over 100 countries, making it one of the most dynamic brands on the planet. [WWW₃₇]

The self-portrait of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine allows to suppose what both the profile and formula of the magazine are. It is intended for young career women worldwide and is designed so as to provide light entertainment rather than to raise serious issues.

4.7 Corpus description

The compiled research corpus consists of one thousand daily horoscopes which were downloaded between 10th December 2011 and 27th March 2012 from the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website, and more precisely the British edition of the website, with all the texts of horoscopes collected on daily basis and found at [WWW₁].

None of the horoscopes was altered or edited in any way as far as their content, structure or punctuation is concerned.

In order to allow a more convenient navigation and reference to the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes attached in *Appendix*, the following symbols have been introduced in the research chapters of the dissertation: H-1, H-2, H-3, etc. Each horoscope (or part of horoscope) quoted as an example has such a symbol assigned.

Some numbers and tendencies are discussed in the following subchapters, those concerning specific single words and polyword expressions. Here, more general calculations are done.

It has to be pointed out, however, that even though three different text analysis tools were used, they still have their limitations. At times, even triple-checked information required my own counting. Hopefully, careful scrutiny has allowed the data presented to be as accurate as possible.

The corpus was analysed with the use of the Word statistic and navigation device and two text analysis tools available online: textalyser.net [WWW₁₀] and online-utility.org [WWW₁₁].

Another important issue that has to be mentioned is that within the corpus of one thousand horoscopes, some texts repeated themselves – thirteen to be precise (twelve in January and one in March). It has been decided not to exclude them, however, because this very fact may also reveal a certain truth about them. The reasons for such situation may be various – a simple editorial mistake, sluggishness on the part of the writer or other people responsible for uploading texts who may assume it is no importance, a temporary server indisposition or other technical problem. Whatever the reason, the horoscopes, though the same in content, were there for the *Cosmopolitan* women to read. Some at least were surely

not aware of the repetition. To this study, it is not a threat – firstly, because the number of one thousand allows for a representative sample and thirteen texts that repeated themselves do not in any case make much difference to the tendencies that are revealed, and secondly, why should this problem be erased or omitted if it exists, while for the study to be reliable and objective, the repetition should be noticed and mentioned.

Bearing in mind all the limits that pertain to text analysis tools, let us study some data that they provide. In the analysis, I only take into consideration the actual texts of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, omitting the dates and Zodiac sign names which function as a headline repeated identically every day, only with a date change.

According to textalyser.net [WWW₁₀], the results of analysing horoscopolical texts are as follows. The total word count is 34371. The number of different words is 4448. The average number of syllables per word is 1.59, which shows that most of the words used in the corpus are short. The average sentence length, on the other hand, is 12.8 words, which again suggests that most of the sentences are rather short and simple than complex in structure. The following analyses and examples will show that in many of these horoscopolical texts the sentences limit themselves to the consideration of simple enlisting issues. It must also be remembered that some phrases or utterances are not sentences in a grammatical sense, although they might have been so classified.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discursive dimension of the beauty myth

The present chapter investigates different aspects of the discourse in question. It starts with a content analysis of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, then proceeds with a quantitative analysis in order to support the qualitative study with statistics and confirm the generic characteristics of the horoscopes in terms of length, register, lexical density or readability. Then, the chapter outlines the overall profile of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine, focuses on discourse participants and discusses the context of horoscopes as a crucial aspect which enables better discourse comprehension. It also discusses the use of women's language in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. Last but not least, the chapter concentrates on the language of success, since that is assumed to be a characteristic feature of the discussed genre and to serve the discourse of the beauty myth.

For the purposes of the following chapter, it is possible to assume that *discursive* implies the occurrence of relatively stable elements of text, which elements create the horoscope as a genre.

5.1 Content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes

A content analysis of basic themes included in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes may precede a more thorough linguistic investigation of these texts in terms of style, register and structure with which the transfer of the content is realised. An appropriate research tool is necessary, however.

It seems possible to adopt a typology suggested by Pisarkowa (1978: 19), which was mentioned in the first chapter of the part devoted to horoscopes as discourse representation, perhaps, in a slightly modified version. Even though Pisarkowa's classes of topics referred to those characteristic for everyday talk, the typology can be applied in the analysis of written texts of horoscopes, based on the assumption that the authors of press or online horoscopes tend to respect the expectations of the readers, since everyday life has various aspects that can be described. As mentioned before in the theoretical chapter, the horoscopical content results

from a combination of the expectations of individual addressees, overall knowledge about the world (usually stereotypically described) and the publishing context. From the thematic scope of everyday conversations, then, one may conclude what the general expectations and interests of the readers are.

Horoscopes are, therefore, assumed to treat with issues that are to an extent the topics tackled in everyday life conversations. This assumption has to be complemented with another, however. In accordance with the assumptions concerning discourse and myth functioning – i.e. discourse and myth are not to be considered only as a socio-cultural product that can be investigated linguistically, but also as a specific medium or a process that takes part in shaping the socio-cultural reality and identity, modifying and establishing its structure and value hierarchies – *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes simultaneously stand as a discourse or myth representation and a medium for conveying particular images of the world and women, promoting and, thus, contributing to the direction of social life and the determination of individuals' self-concept and behaviour.

The typology suggested by Pisarkowa (1978) allows for putting the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in relative order. The specificity of the study material and the context it appears in, however, allow the assumption that the horoscopes in question may include other topics than those mentioned under Pisarkowa's somewhat general headings. Or it would, perhaps, be more accurate to say that their content may tend to focus on specific themes, promoting behaviours and approaches in conformity with the *Cosmopolitan* vision and ideals, while putting others aside, ignoring or devaluing them.

A slightly modified version of Pisarkowa's (1978) division applied in this study includes the following categories: (1) biography and the past; (2) home, family and friends; (3) work, profession and career; (4) education, school and learning; (5) leisure time, holiday and entertainment; (6) cultural life; (7) services; (8) ideologies; and (9) miscellaneous.

5.1.1 Biography and the past

Biographical pieces of information are never mentioned in horoscopes – this can be easily verified. Moreover, press horoscopes serve a variety of addressees who, even though unified under a specific addressee profile, have multiple life experiences. The past is mentioned occasionally, but always in very general terms.

In the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, past references most often reoccur as periods which have taught a lesson, which have been tiring, challenging and difficult, and which have either

led to a better now, with a potential to bring an even better future or which have to be rethought in order to rearrange the present and the future for better and more successful life. The past seems to have had an immense impact on making decisions, the experiences gained might have been earned through struggles, mistakes or effort, but this load never condemns the reader to failure in the end. On the contrary, reconsidering it may help to resolve a stalemate, free oneself from limiting thinking and relationships. What has been the case for some time is now going to change.

The horoscopes usually encourage action, to change an old self into one new and fresh. Some, however, suggest caution, patience and waiting. Still others foresee further struggles that can be undertaken after taking a deep breath and applying the right tactics. The horoscopes do not give answers, of course. Rather, they seem to pose dilemmas and to create a feeling of uncertainty. The choice is always the reader's. The stars (or else circumstances) may be favourable, or not. The consequences are an effect of one's own decisions and actions, not divine or magical forces.

Horoscopes do not lie. Myth has no interest in lying. It is enough to overgeneralise, it is enough to hide one thing and expose something else, it is enough to distort or remain silent, it is enough to disclaim responsibility.

Let us cite a few examples. The first horoscope implies that there must have been some obstacles over quite a long period of time, which contribute to little progress in the end. Still, there is a prediction of an end to the recent bad luck:

Gemini December 16 – There is a reason why you haven't made more solid progress with particular projects, places or faces over the last few years. As a student, traveller, writer, teacher, publisher or woman of the world, you've been stuck in the most muddled cycle of your life. This ends within eight weeks. For now, though, ask yourself if the muddle zone is back. [H-58]

Another horoscope suggests that an old way of thinking should be rejected and some new, fresh ideas should take its place. It suggests a change and tries to motivate to take some action by pointing out that the woman can manage:

Scorpio December 22 – Work, university life, diet, fitness, volunteering. Oh yes, and sleep and relaxation patterns. What will you reinvent first, on that list? Because you can. Something really amazing is breaking through in your astrological chart. It's called overdue change for 2012. Drop an old, tired way of thinking. Follow that big signpost that just appeared for you. [H-113]

In the next example, it is implied that there has been a long period of struggles in the woman's professional life. It says that even though she has been successful at times, there have also been some failures. The horoscope ends with a promise of another possibility and with advice not to act hastily:

Taurus December 30 – You've taken a long and winding road in your professional life, your time as a student or your role as a volunteer. Some episodes in the last few years were worth it, even though they confused you (and everybody else). Some were just very...muddy. Now there's another little possibility for you. What will you do? Tip: Wait until after February 3rd! [H-195]

The following horoscopolical text implies that there have been signs of what might happen in a specific field of the woman's life, so that she could have predicted certain matters:

Aries February 13 – You were shown what might happen (unfortunately) in terms of your former or current partner, some months ago. Or were you just shown a vision of what might be, as a single woman? Tonight you can take stock. How are you approaching this and is it still working for you? Saturn is in your zone of love, sex and commitment. So face your fears and be utterly practical about what you are doing to manage them. [H-526]

People always tend to search for something better. Enumerating imperfections to be improved in various fields of life comes very easily, which is why horoscopolical half-truths sound convincing. *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes do not lie, as the myth does not convey anything that can be proved to be completely false. There is always *something* that can be considered imperfect, unsatisfactory or inadequate, *something* whose quality, status or value may be enhanced on the condition that one finds out what this *something* is and revolutionizes it correctly. *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes encourage small and great revolutions, provide worldly tips and promise or foretell a better future. Eventual success or failure depends on the action taken. Of course, one may decide not to take any; however, aspirations for success and the ideal, and becoming a successful woman (no matter if at work or at home, in the improvement of the body or mind, relationships, sex life, dieting and fitness resolutions or shopping habits) are always being promoted and highly-valued in the *Cosmopolitan* reality. Though it may sound ridiculous to question the importance and value of aspirations and improvements of various kind, a threat is posed by the vicious circle of striving after perfection, an illusion that generates a belief that being imperfect in any way is wrong, inadequate or shameful. This, in turn, generates the feeling of guilt and may lower the sense of self-esteem. After all, the formula of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in question remains unchanged day after day. The

readers are provided with similar messages over and over again. Different things are awaiting improvement on a daily basis. In this, the beauty myth reveals its persistence and importunity.

The contrast between the old and the new is observable in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. The old is certainly more often valued more negatively while the new, what is yet to come, is expected to bring more positive energy and potential, freedom, independence, success, beauty and happiness. To prove it with some examples:

Taurus February 10 – If some chunk of your old world, and old reality, appears to be falling away, take it as a good sign. You need the freedom, and the sense of possibility and potential will be huge, once you let a brand new idea in. This is the very early stages of something that could grow so much bigger. Depending on how experimental you've been, it's a revolution of sorts. And it affects you from the inside, out. [H-501]

The above horoscope puts the woman's old reality in opposition to what the future has to offer. The only thing that she has to do is to let a fresh idea wake up the potential. The horoscope below is quite similar – the old way of thinking is valued negatively as compared to what radical changes may bring.

Sagittarius February 10 – The old way of thinking about intimacy (or other people's children, or even your own eventual motherhood) seems so dusty and ancient. In fact, the more you look at what's spinning around now, the more you realise you can't keep on investing in the past, unless you are allowed to experiment wildly with the future. Luckily someone is around you to assist. This person is also interested in radical change. [H-494]

As it can be seen, the promise of a possible spectacular future seems even more encouraging when juxtaposed with the picture of the past, of what has been troubling, unsatisfactory, limiting and exhausting for so long.

What is interesting, *a former partner* or *a former lover* keeps reappearing in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes as an element of the past that could affect the present or the future. Still, former partners/lovers almost always appear in the same word combination which allows for much looser interpretation and "application" of horoscopolical messages – the phrase *former, current or potential lover* appears 13 times and *former, current or potential partner* appears 45 times in the corpus, with other combinations of these words occurring less frequently, such as *past, present or potential lovers*, *your partner*, *former partner*, *potential partner* etc. The word *former* itself appears 72 times, i.e. in 72 horoscopes, *ex* four times.

5.1.2 Home, family and friends

The frequent reoccurrence of partners and lovers in the horoscopical discourse – no matter if former, present or potential – makes it possible to deduce how important a part of a woman's life they are or are meant to be. This is not only reflected in the analysis of single words, such as *lover* (21 occurrences), *lovers* (7 occurrences), *partner* (87 occurrences) or *partners* (7 occurrences), but also in the study of polyword phrases which occur very frequently in the corpus (this data has been obtained with the use of an online word analysis device – online-utility.org [WWW₁₁]). To support the idea, here are some eight-word and seven-word top phrases (without punctuation marks) that contain the above words, and the number of their occurrences:

<i>happening with your former current or potential partner</i>	3
<i>with your former current or potential partner</i>	16
<i>your former current or potential partner is</i>	9
<i>about your former current or potential partner</i>	4
<i>with a former current or potential partner</i>	4
<i>about your former current or potential lover</i>	3

Some more six-word top phrases containing the words are as follows:

<i>your former current or potential partner</i>	40
<i>former current or potential partner is</i>	9
<i>your former current or potential lover</i>	8
<i>a former current or potential lover</i>	5
<i>a former current or potential partner</i>	5

Home means people in the first place. In the horoscopes in question, family bonds, members of the family, relationships of various kind (including family, friendship and the abovementioned intimate partnership), family and social roles (especially those ascribed to women), as well as issues inevitably reappearing as connected with womanhood, i.e. fertility or pregnancy, are fairly frequent.

These subjects are taken up very often firstly because they are inscribed in the nature of horoscopes as a specific genre, secondly, because of the astrological rules by which they are governed, i.e. the twelve Astrological Houses of Horoscope, and thirdly, the more so, because they are stereotypically associated with the womanly domain. The word *home* appears 34 times in the corpus, *family* – 107 times, and *friend* – 54 times, plus 22 times in plural.

Apart from the use of the word *house* serving as an astrological term which refers to one of the twelve fields of experience in which the energy coming from the Zodiac signs and planets operates, the concept appears within two contexts. This is clearly visible in the analysis of exhaustive polyword phrases which appear throughout the whole collection of horoscopes.

Some most frequent phrases containing eight words (without punctuation marks) that include the word *house* and the number of occurrences within the corpus are as follows:

<i>the house the business the flat or the</i>	7
<i>house the business the flat or the possessions</i>	6
<i>money the house the business the flat or</i>	4
<i>the cash the house the business the flat</i>	4
<i>money the house the business the possessions or</i>	3
<i>cash the house the business the flat or</i>	3
<i>with the money the house the business the</i>	3
<i>house the possessions the business or the flat</i>	3
<i>the house the business the possessions or the</i>	3
<i>house the business the possessions or the flat</i>	3
<i>the money the house the business the flat</i>	3
<i>the house the possessions the business or the</i>	3
<i>money the house the possessions the business or</i>	3
<i>the money the house the business the possessions</i>	3
<i>in terms of the money the house the</i>	3
<i>the money the house the possessions the business</i>	3
<i>the house the business or the flat or</i>	2

Some most frequent phrases containing seven or six words and including the word *house* are as follows:

<i>the house the business the flat or</i>	7
<i>house the business the flat or the</i>	7
<i>the money the house the business the</i>	7
<i>money the house the business the flat</i>	4
<i>cash the house the business the flat</i>	4
<i>with the money the house the business</i>	4
<i>the cash the house the business the</i>	4
<i>the house flat family or share household</i>	4
<i>money the house the business the possessions</i>	3
<i>money the house the possessions the business</i>	3
<i>the house the business the possessions or</i>	3
<i>house the possessions the business or the</i>	3

<i>the house flat share household or family</i>	3
<i>your house flat family or share household</i>	3
<i>money the house the business the</i>	8
<i>the house the business the flat</i>	8
<i>the money the house the business</i>	8
<i>house flat family or share household</i>	8
<i>house the business the flat or</i>	7
<i>the house flat family or flatmates</i>	5
<i>the cash the house the business</i>	4
<i>house flat share household or family</i>	4
<i>the house flat family or share</i>	4
<i>the house flat family or flatmate</i>	4
<i>cash the house the business the</i>	4

It can be seen, then, that one of the contexts in which the idea of house appears, includes the concepts of money, business, flat, and possessions as connected ideas, which is a somewhat materialistic approach. The other context places the house together with family, flat and shared household. This latter seems more people-oriented, as it refers to a relatively narrow group of family members who constitute a functional unit involved in various interrelationships.

As the horoscopes suggest, people who enter the *Cosmopolitan* woman's space seem to fall into certain categories, but the roles they play in her life are not always obvious. Moreover, the words may refer to the woman herself and a role ascribed to her (e.g. being a mum), and not refer to a relationship between her and another family member (e.g. the woman and a mother (not necessarily hers) relationship).

Nonetheless, the concept of motherhood reappears throughout the corpus. If it refers to the woman herself, it is usually the to-be-or-not-to-be-a-mum dilemma, such as in the example below:

Gemini March 9 –After October, you will no longer have to care so much about the impact you are having on the next generation. Will you be a parent or not? What about other peoples' kids? What if you want to avoid motherhood? Don't let the current Moon mood trigger a hasty decision. [H-806]

Another horoscope carries a similar message. It focuses on the woman's choices concerning motherhood and some circumstances that are supposed to assist the woman while making them:

Libra February 13 – This is like a giant hand reaching down from heaven and cleaning your windscreen. It's going to make a difference to the long-term choices you make – either about having kids or dating Dads. Or maybe being child-free! Once Mercury, the messenger planet, lines up with Saturn (close to 7pm) it's all laid out to scrutinise. This applies to any professional or charity involvement with children too. You can see clearly. [H-520]

The next horoscope suggests that the woman has been confused as far as her sexuality, intimacy, relationships and motherhood are concerned for a long time. It also mentions that the issue has caused some emotional tension.

Libra February 20 – Time for some emotional recovery and a little normality. It's been years since you've been able to look at questions about sex, lovers, parenthood (or decisions not to parent) and so on – without confusion. By extension, this involves issues around other people's kids, contraception, suitable fathers – everything! Today lets you feel all the necessary feelings. At last. [H-599]

The following text includes the same message as the one above. Being a mum or not is a dilemma that pushes the woman into an emotional maze.

Virgo March 15 – You have to find your own way through the emotional maze. What you've been going through makes you more honest with yourself about sex, future parenthood (yes? no?) or the wider world of children. The true answer is close. [H-875]

Another horoscope, on the other hand, advises not to make hasty decisions that may actually have far-reaching consequences:

Scorpio February 1 – This is an epic astrological cycle for making babies under confusing conditions, so if you don't want one (or he doesn't) then heed your horoscope and look the condoms in the eye. Other people's children (young relatives, friends' kids, professional involvements with younger people) are also in the picture. That agreement needs watching from a distance. [H-401]

More often, however, the concept appears in the sense of mother figures that enter the *Cosmopolitan* woman's reality in one way or another, or in the sense of motherly behaviour. Here are some examples:

Aquarius February 7 – The Moon in Leo suggests that you, he or she is currently playing the role of mother. So this is all about how one person in this situation 'mothers' or nurtures the other one. Your former, current or potential partner is involved. Don't get so distracted by this issue that you lose the thread with bigger questions, though. These revolve around the way your name or physical appearance looks to other people. [H-467]

The above horoscope implies behaviour that seems typical for mothers in general – it might concern taking care of a relative or a close person or trying to bring up or nurse somebody. At the end of this horoscope, on the other hand, the reader is informed there is another issue that needs more attention. Namely, taking care of the woman's image – she is supposed to meet the expectations of the people who watch and evaluate her appearance and behaviour.

Another horoscope puts the motherly role in the context of the woman's career. It mentions some possible dilemmas, but does not really specify what the problem might be:

Scorpio February 7 – The Moon in Leo suggests questions about a maternal or 'motherly' role in the context of your career, volunteer role or life at university. And this could even be about a man, but it's far more likely to be about you or another woman. You only have limited time and energy, though, so perhaps it's better directed at the house, flat, share household or family. Crucial information is coming through or going out. It's time. [H-471]

The next horoscope, on the other hand, mentions the idea of mothering but it is unclear if it implies the woman's dilemma whether to become a mum or not, or a person who tries to act like a mum:

Capricorn February 17 – If a mother (or a wannabe mummy) enters your world via questions about your hair, body, face, clothes, name, reputation, profile – well. Quite clearly there is a vat of emotional vulnerability and neediness at the moment, felt by you or others. What happened over the last few months has seen to that. But for the sake of whatever you've worked out in your life, do you really need Big Mummy? [H-560]

The concept of mother and mothering is rather vague. This is probably partly because it is placed within a very wide context, and the horoscope texts are very metaphorical – their content allows for multiple interpretations. Interestingly enough, a *Cosmopolitan* woman does not seem to actually be a mother. The horoscopes rather suggest that there happen to be some children around, but not hers, that there are some thoughts being taken, or about to be taken, concerning babies. Questions about pregnancy, sex, contraception, babies, other people's children, and the like are frequent in the corpus, or rather suggestions of questions about these. The study of words stands proof that the issue is of considerable importance in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life. Here is a list of words most directly connected with the home-family-friends category as they appear in the corpus (as counted by textalyser.net [WWW₁₀]). It must be added, however, that the choice of words has been made according to my own subjective judgement. Being aware of its possible limitations and imperfections, still, the

collection of words may, in my opinion, reflect the tendencies in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's construction of reality within this particular field of experience.

word	number of occurrences	word	number of occurrences	word	number of occurrences
<i>house</i>	197	<i>apartment</i>	11	<i>woman's</i>	3
<i>people</i>	178	<i>generation</i>	11	<i>dad-dating</i>	3
<i>flat</i>	136	<i>friendship</i>	10	<i>friends'</i>	2
<i>person</i>	108	<i>teens</i>	9	<i>intimate</i>	2
<i>family</i>	107	<i>relatives</i>	9	<i>children's</i>	2
<i>partner</i>	87	<i>teenagers</i>	9	<i>housekeeping</i>	2
<i>group</i>	80	<i>sexual</i>	8	<i>maternal</i>	2
<i>children</i>	55	<i>member</i>	8	<i>girl</i>	2
<i>friend</i>	54	<i>mother</i>	8	<i>partnerships</i>	2
<i>woman</i>	44	<i>domestic</i>	8	<i>homeland</i>	2
<i>sex</i>	42	<i>godchildren</i>	7	<i>nephew</i>	2
<i>social</i>	41	<i>parents</i>	7	<i>men</i>	2
<i>household</i>	39	<i>female</i>	7	<i>pregnant</i>	2
<i>home</i>	34	<i>groups</i>	7	<i>condoms</i>	2
<i>people's</i>	27	<i>parenthood</i>	7	<i>'friends'</i>	1
<i>pregnancy</i>	27	<i>dad</i>	7	<i>sons/daughters</i>	1
<i>love</i>	26	<i>lovers</i>	7	<i>females</i>	1
<i>kids</i>	25	<i>dads</i>	7	<i>sexuality</i>	1
<i>flatmate</i>	25	<i>baby</i>	6	<i>mama</i>	1
<i>houses</i>	24	<i>child</i>	6	<i>members</i>	1
<i>babies</i>	24	<i>date</i>	5	<i>pregnancies</i>	1
<i>women</i>	23	<i>intimacy</i>	5	<i>'friendship'</i>	1
<i>routine</i>	23	<i>relative</i>	5	<i>schoolkids</i>	1
<i>friends</i>	22	<i>godchild</i>	5	<i>married</i>	1
<i>lover</i>	22	<i>acquaintance</i>	4	<i>soulmates</i>	1
<i>friendship</i>	17	<i>peer</i>	4	<i>stepchildren</i>	1
<i>dating</i>	17	<i>peering</i>	4	<i>brother</i>	1
<i>relationship</i>	17	<i>kids'</i>	3	<i>sisterhood</i>	1
<i>flatmates</i>	16	<i>male</i>	3	<i>husband</i>	1
<i>man</i>	15	<i>fathers</i>	3	<i>'mothers'</i>	1
<i>contraception</i>	15	<i>parent</i>	3	<i>superwoman</i>	1
<i>single</i>	14	<i>niece</i>	3	<i>kid</i>	1
<i>flats</i>	13	<i>motherhood</i>	3	<i>'motherly'</i>	1
<i>relationships</i>	13	<i>marriage</i>	3	<i>nephews</i>	1
<i>apartments</i>	12	<i>mummy</i>	3		
<i>partnership</i>	12	<i>mum</i>	3		

Table 3 Occurrences of words connected with the home-family-friends category

It seems that intimate relationships are of particular concern in the horoscopes. And so are the matters of sex, dating, love, pregnancy, contraception, and children. The role of the mother is relatively rare in comparison to the abovementioned. On the other hand, fathers (or dads, as they usually appear) are quite high on the list – the words *dad*, *dads* and *fathers* altogether count as 17 occurrences in the corpus. Surprisingly, it is not the role of the father that is meant in most of their uses, nor is it the *Cosmopolitan* woman's own dad that is meant. It is not even choosing the right husband to serve as a good dad for potential children of the *Cosmopolitan* woman. These, though very rare, do appear. However, 14 occurrences out of 17 concern instead dating dads. Here are only a few examples:

Scorpio March 23 – The world of babies, children or teenagers is more important as spring approaches, but it's also more complicated and confusing. This also applies to contraception, pregnancy or Dad-dating. Double-check what is 'known' now. [H-957]

The text above very generally points out that the issues connected with children, contraception, pregnancy or dating dads are becoming more and more important, but they also bring confusion.

The horoscope below also mentions dating dads as one of the issues to be solved in the near future and seems to place it on an equal footing with unplanned parenthood:

Gemini March 21 – Maybe your fear is that your ex will become a stepdad or have a kid. Perhaps the issue is the loss of a pregnancy, or never being pregnant at all. Or unplanned parenthood! Or dating dads? Tick any box. But a solution is here. [H-938]

Another text insinuates that dating a father (as one of the issues mentioned among the ones of sex, pregnancy and children) has not been beneficial at all and has not brought any answers. The horoscope promises improvement though:

Aquarius February 29 – Whatever you have been experiencing in terms of sex, pregnancy questions, dating fathers or other people's kids takes you nowhere. Just when you think you've changed the agenda, you haven't. It improves 50% in June, 200% from August. Much is yet to come. [H-702]

In yet another example, there is a prediction of accidental pregnancy which may well indicate starting a romantic relationship with a man who already has kids:

Capricorn February 25 – Your astrological chart suggests accidental pregnancy (or a Dad-dating situation) could still be on the cards by June so take care this weekend. In other cases it's your niece, nephew or godchild – or the world of children en masse – which still offers you so much. [H-656]

The choices that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is supposed to make often build up the dilemma of being or not being free. Is it better to be a free woman or to belong to a man? One of the horoscopes points out the question as one of the deepest that the woman has to face. The horoscope uses a metaphor that juxtaposes peacocks as those that belong with dogs as those that are free and independent:

Sagittarius December 26 – Your dreams are quite interesting at the moment, as they reflect your deepest dilemmas about being a free woman, or belonging to a man. You will sort out quite a lot this way. Or maybe you're having strange cosmic experiences relating to those questions! Watch for peacocks and dogs as symbols. Peacocks belong. Dogs run free. And you? [H-142]

Another horoscope foresees breaking free from a relationship that has turned out to be a trap:

Libra March 5 – You will break free from the person who is against you – or you will find freedom through, or from, a love-life situation making you feel trapped. This is an astrological promise. Just remember life will take a zig-zag path until April 22. Until then, don't necessarily trust 'finalities.' [H-754]

The horoscope that follows once again reminds of the dilemma whether to engage in a love relationship and belong to a man or experience true freedom by refraining from this love situation:

Leo March 11 – Clinch that success connection, as this person will take you closer to a towering ambition by the middle of next week. Scan the internet for job ads today and tomorrow. On a more personal, heart and soul note – do you want to belong? Or do you prefer to be truly free? [H-828]

Another horoscope quite clearly states that there are two kinds of women – those who do not bother to commit to a man to gain comfort, money and prestige, and those who value freedom and independence:

Taurus January 16 – Your former, current or potential partner is at the heart of big questions. You have to be honest and say there are two kinds of Taurus women. One kind would rather commit to a man because of the status and comfort – not to mention the property or lifestyle gains. Another kind has totally different values and loves her freedom, wildness and oxygen. [H-335]

The following example poses exactly the same dilemma:

Gemini February 24 – The asteroid Juno is showing you a former, current or potential lover and asking you to rate security versus freedom. It's a personal choice you made, or are making. Your career or university life poses a question too. At what point does something become outrageous? [H-651]

It appears that being with a man feels like being trapped in one way or another. The latter two texts also suggest the benefits and inevitable losses – belonging to a man allegedly guarantees higher status and a comfortable life, which is probably unattainable when single and independent. Being a free spirit is desirable, but it gives no guarantees in terms of safety, security or “cosiness”. In quite a few horoscopes “prestige, comfort and belonging” as well as “safety and security” are juxtaposed with “freedom, spontaneity and wildness” and an independent “free spirit at heart”.

Other horoscopes metaphorically point out the dilemma of being free or being an enslaved domestic goddess, such as in the examples below, in which the contrast between a woman who commits to a man and a woman who decides to be on her own is very evident:

Capricorn December 26 – You have a friend or acquaintance (in your tribe, online or offline) who sums up the big dilemma for women everywhere. **Should we be single and free, or shackled up and shackled?** This female in your life either loves being married or de facto, and having the prestige and comfort – or she'd rather be out in the woods. Or out on the town. And you? [H-141]

Cancer December 26 – Matters of the heart, soul or perhaps the knickers are affecting one in two Cancerian women. **Do you want to be a domestic goddess, and a bird in a gilded cage? Or do you want to fly your own way?** For the remaining Cancerians, there are big questions about pregnancy, dating a Dad, or your tiny relatives and friends' kids. Freedom or not? [H-147]

These two horoscopes above do not seem to recognise any other options than being a bird in a gilded cage or running free out in the woods, to use the metaphoric language of the horoscopes.

Thirdly, being free is also associated with having no children:

Cancer January 16 – The decisions you make about contraception, sexual partners (or single life) have a long-term effect now, because it's all tied into bigger questions about your former, current or potential lover. Maybe children are involved, or a hovering question about future pregnancy. By February the choice has been made. Will it be freedom, or the other thing? [H-333]

The above-cited horoscope quite clearly states the choice between being free (without children) and deciding to become a parent (with all the consequences). The next text is similar – it points out the long-term implications the choices made may have.

Libra February 13 – This is like a giant hand reaching down from heaven and cleaning your windscreen. It's going to make a difference to the long-term choices you make – either about having kids or dating Dads. Or maybe being child-free! Once Mercury, the messenger planet, lines up with Saturn (close to 7pm) it's all laid out to scrutinise. This applies to any professional or charity involvement with children too. You can see clearly. [H-520]

Friendship is also important. Friends are usually people whose advice or example may help in resolving problematic issues. Sometimes they are there to teach something – the *Cosmopolitan* woman can talk to them or treat them as an example to follow (or not). Often, friends are there for her to help her realise the choices she is facing. Please consider the following horoscope:

Scorpio January 9 – There is someone in your circle of friends, or the group around you, best described as a true leader. Others copy this impressive person. He or she will play a useful part in what you're now dealing with. And by Friday, so much will be sorted out. If you commit to a way forward which gives everyone control, on some level, then it will truly work. [H-273]

In another horoscope, the woman is advised to investigate two cases: case one – a friend who is single and has no children, and case two – a friend who is dedicated to her home and family. This is supposed to help the *Cosmopolitan* woman to make her own choice.

Capricorn January 16 – You have two very different friends, who connect you to two different social circles. One is single by choice and has no interest in having children. She's more likely to have a dog! The other is very much into the respectability of marriage or de facto domesticity. Over the next two weeks you will navigate this fork in the road. It's quite an education. [H-327]

The observation of friends or reference to them in one way or another is a beneficial thing to do. This can be seen in the two following horoscopes:

Aries February 7 – You benefit from seeing a friend, or group, from an outside perspective. There is a conversation or piece of news waiting and it will make all the difference, too. If you ever needed a sure sign that things have changed, this is it. And in one instant it may become evident that new rules and new realities are all around you. What you might have assumed or relied on back in 2011 is beginning to look pretty irrelevant. [H-478]

Leo February 9 – The solution you are looking for lies with friends, or a group. This all lies in your past, as the Moon's Node points to old karma. You have certainly scored points here and it is time to use them. Having gone precisely nowhere with something that has been bugging you since late last year, the answer is now clear. Turn to an old friend, or a circle of people, to get somewhere. And test 'friends' too. Do they pass muster? [H-486]

On the other hand, friends are sometimes confusing or troublesome. As in any other kind of relationship, friendship is sometimes also put to the test. In such situations, horoscopes suggest being sensible:

Scorpio February 23 – A friend – or group – should not become the source of conflict this year. Of course, the current atmosphere does not help. But you do not have to buy into what is going on. Clearly, a plan is required. But with enough thought, it can be a smart one. Without emotional heat. [H-634]

The above-mentioned horoscope may suggest that it is possible for a friend to become the source of a certain conflict though it had better not happen. The one below, on the other hand, shows friends as a source of confusion that might not be helpful in a given situation.

Aries February 24 – Instead of being confused by friends and groups (or confusing them!) you can now be Sensible Sally and protect a situation. What's really crucial now, though, is your secret. Or your time alone. This is a major judgement call. Are things going too far, or is change right? [H-653]

Another horoscope depicts a friend as a person responsible for worsening a situation and some unnecessary emotional escalation:

Scorpio March 3 – If a friend or group in your world has generated heat, don't give it any oxygen unless you want a forest fire of emotion after April 14th. For the moment, nothing is happening, which is quite useful. It means you can go back in time to review things and process them. [H-729]

Clearly, people fill a significant part of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's time and space. They are part of her intimate life and her social reality. She keeps reconsidering her desires. She faces dilemmas. People she encounters influence her mood, personality, decisions, behaviour – some inspire, some pose a threat. The *Cosmopolitan* woman misses love, she is open to the new experiences the horoscopes encourage. On the other hand, she is warned against being involved in risky dad-dating or belonging to a man. The word *belong* seems problematic since it immediately places the woman in an inferior position in comparison to the man – the horoscopes, as it were, create the only possible opposition: being single and truly free or belonging to a man and, therefore, secure, safe and high in status. The dilemmas

that the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes create may be intended to expose the advantages and disadvantages of two opposite ideas, obviously promoting freedom, but do they not also create an inevitable (and unnecessary?) fear of losing it when involved in an intimate relationship? There are many children in the woman's reality, yet she feels tense when she is to decide whether or not to have a baby on her own. Again, the matter of freedom is in question.

The paradox of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes is that even though they aspire to be liberating to women, inspiring and empowering, they may create threats, confusion and the feeling of instability. This may, in turn, destabilise identity. Further, horoscopes which juxtapose two opposite possibilities that women encounter – that is being a free spirit or being “enslaved” by the husband who offers cosiness – may, in fact, work for the beauty myth, since they consolidate the idea that women need men and are inferior to them. This is the trick that the myth plays – on the one hand, *Cosmopolitan* offers and promotes freedom to its readers, but on the other hand, mostly for the sake of the advertisers, it promotes masochism. Because much of its content concerns women's advancement, it has to temper its influence by dosing it with a portion of the beauty myth.

5.1.3 Work, profession and career

The idea of work, career and business appears very often in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. The very words are frequent: *work* has 121 occurrences, *career* – 66 occurrences, *business* – 164 occurrences plus one in plural, *profession* – only twice, however. Of course, what is necessarily entailed in this general idea of work and career is money. The word *money* occurs 138 times, plus 23 occurrences for *cash*, 39 for *financial*, 6 for *finance*, and 66 for *possessions*. Interestingly enough, volunteer work or a volunteer role appears quite often. This probably means activities which the woman undertakes although she is not paid. The expression could hide a broad spectrum of various activities, such as helping someone, housework, commitments or charity. The word *volunteer* has 54 occurrences in the corpus, *volunteering* – 19, *non-profit* – 13.

Again, the words are often combined together, as can be seen in a number of polyword phrases that continually appear in the horoscopes. They also often appear with the concepts of house or flat, or life at university. Some phrases that contain eight words are as follows:

the house the business the flat or the	7
house the business the flat or the possessions	6

<i>money the house the business the flat or</i>	4
<i>your career life at university or volunteer role</i>	4
<i>the cash the house the business the flat</i>	4
<i>money the house the business the possessions or</i>	3
<i>your career your life at university or your</i>	3
<i>work university life or your non-profit role</i>	3
<i>cash the house the business the flat or</i>	3
<i>with the money the house the business the</i>	3
<i>house the possessions the business or the flat</i>	3
<i>the house the business the possessions or the</i>	3
<i>house the business the possessions or the flat</i>	3
<i>the money the house the business the flat</i>	3
<i>the house the possessions the business or the</i>	3
<i>money the house the possessions the business or</i>	3
<i>the money the house the business the possessions</i>	3
<i>in terms of the money the house the</i>	3
<i>the money the house the possessions the business</i>	3
<i>the house the business or the flat or</i>	2

The above collection of reoccurring words and expressions presents the importance, or lack of it, that this field of life takes in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's reality. The numbers suggest that work and money constitute a significant component of her life experience. It is clear in the above polyword expressions, however, that business and career are still most often combined with her home life. Even though the woman is perceived as a financially-independent person who manages her work life, so many occurrences of the house in these phrases, juxtaposed to career and money, may denote the fact that she is still primarily the manager of the house life. This should not surprise us, however. Managing the house reality has been part of female life experience for centuries. Despite the fact that this role has undergone many changes, it seems still to be hers. Another consideration is the specificity of horoscopes – they need to appear adequate to a wide spectrum of readers. Perhaps it would be too risky to assume that every single reader has their own career, although they are encouraged to aspire to it. The house is still a place where important matters have to be managed, thought over, dealt with and rearranged if necessary.

The horoscopes often promise some positive changes when it comes to work and money. Although they sometimes indicate temporary problems, difficulties, or the necessity to learn, an optimistic ending is promised. Horoscopes are definitely more likely to send positive messages. Here are some exemplary texts:

Pisces December 19 – You are having an epic financial, property and business cycle so no wonder it all feels like learning to drive. Or learning to fly (let's be optimistic). From the end of 2012 the hard bits are over. But there's always an unbelievably practical, useful new lesson to learn. And so it is now. Just do what's required and remember, experts are always on hand. [H-86]

The horoscope above indicates a situation concerning money, property or business that requires caution and simultaneously provides a useful lesson to learn, especially when you can count on specialists in the field.

The next horoscope, on the other hand, implies that though the financial, property or business situation is not beneficial now, it is going to unexpectedly improve soon:

Pisces December 22 – The more complex side of your financial, property or business situation (or the shared or borrowed possessions) is no fun. No picnic. And certainly no champagne party. But what about your own cash, house, flat, business or possessions? Your horoscope says that is where one of the most exciting and unexpected changes of the year is unfolding. [H-110]

Similarly, the following text indicates that there has been a long period of struggles as far as money, business or possessions are concerned, but there is going to be a liberating turn:

Pisces December 27 – It's been a long, long uphill road for you in terms of the finances, house, business, flat or possessions (linked to individuals or organisations, anyway). And yet, what's this? Could it be the planet of exciting change, Uranus, lighting up your zone of values? It means this much, now: a liberating 'Aaaaah' of relief as you change what things are worth! [H-150]

The next example also shows that the woman should expect significant progress in terms of money, business or property after a period full of hopes and little change:

Taurus January 19 – The money, the business, the house, the flat, the stuff – which makes you madly hopeful about the future, at the same time that it reminds you of your all-too-real situation? What if I told you that your hopes were correct? From June, Jupiter, the planet of abundance and opportunity, enters your house of money. This is so on the way to progress. [H-347]

It is interesting what the expression *voluntary work* may hide. The *Cosmopolitan* woman seems to be involved in voluntary and non-profit activities quite often. But they are most often combined with work and university life in the horoscopes, such as in the example below:

Taurus December 30 – You’ve taken a long and winding road in your professional life, your time as a student or your role as a volunteer. Some episodes in the last few years were worth it, even though they confused you (and everybody else). Some were just very...muddy. Now there’s another little possibility for you. What will you do? Tip: Wait until after February 3rd! [H-195]

The above-mentioned horoscope implies that on the professional or volunteering path, the woman has experienced many twists and turns. Still, there is a little possibility waiting. The following text suggests that the woman may be even more successful if she takes a risk.

Scorpio January 6 – You can either do what everyone else is doing, in terms of your job, university life or volunteer role – or take the leap. Well, it looks as if you took the leap and now you are seeing just how exciting everything can be, when you experiment. The thing is, anything new or radically different is going to appeal to people who feel just the same as you do. [H-249]

Another horoscope is similar – it encourages the woman to follow her instinct, to be more radical and revolutionary for it may pay. All this refers to the woman’s work, university life or volunteering:

Cancer January 6 – Your little experiment with work, university life or volunteering has paid off, and you can now see why following your instincts and going off the beaten track is a great idea. What you are doing is original and that is partly why it appeals. The ‘revolution in the head’ planet Uranus is encouraging you to do it your way. But others feel just the same, too. [H-253]

Volunteering may be interpreted as activities which the *Cosmopolitan* woman undertakes of her own free will and which involve helping or taking care of people or matters. Charity is possible, but it may well be helping a friend or a member of the family. Another option could be all the self-imposed activities that result from stereotypically female roles, like housework or childcare. Whichever the case, these are supposed to be activities which she is eager to do or are facultative, or which give her satisfaction. And for which she is not paid. This reflects the stereotypical image of the woman as a person full of empathy and readiness to serve others.

In the case of career and financial issues, the horoscopolical content again indicates a kind of dichotomy. Work aspiration and advancement, as well as financial independence, are clearly promoted. The horoscopes also make many promises. On the other hand, the *Cosmopolitan* woman seems to divide her energy between what she is actually paid for and the activities that she is expected to take more or less voluntarily. These latter most probably concern the roles and behaviour stereotypically ascribed to women.

5.1.4 Education, school and learning

The subject of education, school and learning mostly seem to mean university life, as well as learning through collecting experiences or observing other people's life and choices.

The word *university* is relatively frequent – it has 138 occurrences in the corpus, plus 21 for *education* and 4 occurrences for *school*. This result allows us to assume that the idea of education and learning in general is an important part of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's experience, which should not be surprising since it seems naturally to go hand in hand with careers as described above. Successful work experience is often a natural consequence of adequate educational background.

The very fact that university education is present in so many horoscopes indicates two things: firstly, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is a young person, still learning her profession, gaining or improving her work experience; and secondly, it suggests that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is aware of the need to be well-educated and have a profession, which two issues agree with the *Cosmopolitan* magazine profile intended for and promoting successful or aspirant young women.

In the same way as work, university life requires effort at times, but the horoscopes usually provide hopes and promises. This can be seen in the examples cited in the preceding subchapter.

The *Cosmopolitan* woman does not only learn through her own experiences, including travel, books, different cultures or situations she finds herself in, but also by observing the environment and other people whose decisions and choices may allow for better understanding, by considering the pros and cons of someone else's life and, eventually, by taking her own path. Here, in a few horoscopes that follow, there is some proof:

Capricorn January 16 – You have two very different friends, who connect you to two different social circles. One is single by choice and has no interest in having children. She's more likely to have a dog! The other is very much into the respectability of marriage or de facto domesticity. Over the next two weeks you will navigate this fork in the road. It's quite an education.
[H-327]

In the above example, which has already appeared in the analysis, the woman is advised to consider two options, as exemplified by her friends, in order to make her own decision. The following three horoscopes concern the same matter and suggest the same solution for the *Cosmopolitan* woman to follow – to 'conduct' a case study and let her friend teach her a lesson about female freedom:

Aquarius March 22 – You have a friend who does not want children or marriage, or does not have them. She has something to teach you about female freedom now – and the F word. Money is another question. It's held up, but shifts in three weeks. [H-941]

Gemini March 20 – Your friend is teaching you how to be free. The total lack of predictability in his or her behaviour is maddening and mysterious. But this person is your own personal Statue of Liberty. With movement. Take a tip or three. [H-926]

Aquarius March 11 – Through friends, or the group, you are being shown a choice. Do you want prestige, comfort and belonging? Or freedom, spontaneity and wildness? The real priority now, though, should be your hopes for the house or flat. Something is looking so possible, today. [H-821]

Observing friends appears to be very helpful for the *Cosmopolitan* woman to make her choices. But there are also other people whose advice she may follow. In the case of the next horoscope, it is a clever woman that assists the *Cosmopolitan* woman in the search for a successful solution:

Taurus February 25 – A friendship or group involvement is in the spotlight today. That should help you clarify what has been swirling around you since February 3rd. A work, university or volunteering question never quite goes away. But a clever woman will help lead you to a brilliant answer. [H-664]

An intriguing issue is how often in the corpus other people (usually friends or acquaintances) help to decide about parenthood. Their example is there to expose the advantages and disadvantages of having a baby. The tone of the horoscopes, though, often indicates and promotes the benefits of being childless and free. Of course, there are lots of different dilemmas that they are supposed to assist in resolving, but that concerning being a mother is strikingly frequent.

5.1.5 Leisure time, holiday and entertainment

One might expect that there should be quite a lot about leisure time activities, holiday and entertainment in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. Well, it is difficult to decide what should actually belong in this category. What may be considered as free time activities or kind of entertainment is travel, books, the Internet or computers. These concepts appear in the corpus, but they are on many occasions combined with studying or working. Meeting people from foreign cultures may be the result of business travel or holiday.

The word *holiday* does not appear even once in the collection of horoscopes. The reason might, however, be the time when they were being collected, which is winter time. Neither do the expressions *leisure time*, *free time* or *entertainment* appear as general concepts.

Travel is very frequent – 43 occurrences, plus 7 for *travelling*, 14 for *traveller*, an one for *travelled*, 16 for *journey(s)*. It often entails meeting people from different cultures. And here is the number of occurrences of some related words and expressions: *culture* – 8, *cultures* – 22, *nationalities* – 11, *nationality* – 3, *foreign* – 24, including *foreign culture(s)* – 7, *other culture(s)* – 14, *(an)other nationality(-ies)* – 7, *foreign nationalities* – 1, *different nationality(-ies)* – 3, *different culture(s)* – 3, *foreign background* – 2, *foreign friendships* – 1, *international face(s)* – 3, *international differences* – 1. Therefore, it can be assumed that being a *Cosmopolitan* woman involves experiencing foreign cultures. And this, on the other hand, may entail the supposition that she is open to them and explores them eagerly. They teach her a lot and give her pleasure.

Reading books is another activity which can be regarded as a kind of entertainment. But it is also an activity which broadens the *Cosmopolitan* woman's mind. Not by accident is it often listed with university life, education, journeys and foreign nationalities, such as in these examples:

Taurus December 28 – The Pluto cycle you are now experiencing with books, journeys, foreign nationalities, different cultures, the internet, universities or other places of learning is so intense. It probably feels relentless at the moment. But you are also discovering how this all works. When you devote yourself to expanding your knowledge or passing it on, it's so powerful. [H-171]

Libra January 19 – The world of foreign cultures, travel, online publishing, books, university life or education is challenging you. First of all, it is challenging you to be a total realist about particular people, places or unavoidable situations! Secondly, it is challenging you to believe in a bigger, better, brighter future. And you know what? within four months it's on the way. [H-342]

The two above-mentioned horoscopes are similar – they show the importance of learning and broadening the mind. Reading books is one of many other ways to expand the knowledge, such as travelling, discovering foreign cultures or studying at university. The horoscopes encourage taking the challenge, and assure the woman that it is beneficial and that it makes her more powerful.

Other activities which can be considered as belonging to modern leisure time are those connected with computers and the Internet. And these, again, may at the same time be treated as educational. In the corpus, there are listed many names of modern inventions which belong

to the *Cosmopolitan* woman's reality. Here they are shown with the number of their occurrences; please consider *Table 4*:

word	number of occurrences	Word	number of occurrences	word	number of occurrences
<i>computer(s)</i>	31	<i>Twitter</i>	7	<i>SMS messages</i>	2
<i>(tele/smart)phone(s)</i>	29	<i>ISP</i>	3	<i>blogging</i>	1
<i>Internet</i>	28	<i>blog(s)</i>	3	<i>Facebook</i>	1
<i>online</i>	23	<i>Youtube</i>	3	<i>iPads</i>	1
<i>social media</i>	15	<i>dongle</i>	2	<i>Google</i>	1
<i>website(s)</i>	13	<i>multimedia</i>	2	<i>fax machines</i>	1
<i>e-mail</i>	13	<i>tablet</i>	2	<i>podcasting</i>	1

Table 4 *Occurrences of words connected with computers and the Internet*

The horoscopes mostly indicate communication with the above media, although the *Cosmopolitan* woman may also use them for learning or socialising.

To sum up, the *Cosmopolitan* woman uses modern technology mostly for practical reasons and for communication. She extends her knowledge both by using modern inventions and reading. This is also supposed to give her pleasure. What inspires and teaches her most, however, is travelling and exploring foreign cultures – or at least this is what the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes suggest.

5.1.6 Cultural life

Cultural life is often connected with leisure and rest, much of which has already been mentioned in the previous subchapter. Typically cultural activities as such do not occur in the corpus. There is not a single word about cultural events or places such as cinema, theatre, galleries. The word *concert* is used once, but as a metaphor. The same with the word *party* – it occurs four times, but only once to mean an event and three times in the expression *second or third party* to mean a different person. The word *picnic*, used twice, is also used metaphorically.

It seems, therefore, that the *Cosmopolitan* woman's cultural life comes down to what has been listed earlier, i.e. travelling, reading and meeting people, including those of foreign nationalities.

Maybe what could fall into this category is what hides under the name *publishing* or *writing* in the horoscopes. However, even though the idea appears quite frequently in the corpus (in different forms: *publish* – 3, *publishing* – 38, *publisher* – 14, *published* – 2, *write* – 13, *writing* – 20, *writer* – 19, *handwriting* – 1), it seems very general and, therefore, vague. Whether she publishes or benefits from different publications by reading them is often a matter of interpretation. Writing is even broader – sometimes it refers to simply writing something down as opposed to just speaking, sometimes it suggests that the woman is a writer, sometimes the woman is encouraged to list ideas down in writing, and sometimes she is supposed to meet a writer for some reason. Are these activities of a cultural character? Well, if they are treated as activities broadening cultural horizons, then yes. But this still sounds rather contrived.

Could this mean that the *Cosmopolitan* woman does not have a cultural life? No, definitely not. However, it might not constitute the essence of her life, or it might be limited to travelling and meeting people representing different fields and cultures from which she can benefit. At least this is what can be read from the horoscopes.

5.1.7 Services

Services are again a quite problematic issue since, though many different activities could fall into this category, in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes they are scarcely noticeable. This comes as no surprise, however, because horoscopes rarely include such information. If they do, these are usually very general pieces of advice about where to go and what to do to improve one's health, physical condition or appearance. In this sense, it could be assumed that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is advised to take particular action in order to improve her comfort and health by suggesting what fields of her life require consideration or appropriate consultation with a specialist. In the horoscopes in question, even this is not stated explicitly. The most frequent issues that appear in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes which could be linked to benefiting from various more or less specialist services are health, diet, fitness, appearance, body, face, hair, clothes, wellbeing or lifestyle. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that these matters are relatively infrequent in the corpus in comparison to the ones described in the above subchapters.

The word *health* appears 19 times, *healthy* – twice, *unhealthy* – once and *health-related* – once. *Diet* has 6 occurrences, *fitness* – 9, *appearance* – 25, *body* – 11, *face* (with reference to hers, excluding other uses of the word such as (1) the verb meaning *to face*

something in various grammatical forms, (2) other people's faces or (3) in the expression *face-to-face*) – 14, *hair* – 4, *clothes* – 1, *lifestyle* – 25, *wellbeing* – 3, *weight* – 2.

In conclusion, horoscopes as such rarely include information concerning making use of services. If they do, this usually comes as a kind of advice or as indicating some problems (most often connected with health and medical services) that one may be facing. As the above numbers suggest, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes do have references to health issues as well as to body condition and appearance. These last ones have been placed in the services category since they also may involve making use of beauty treatments of various kind. With these references, the horoscopes implicitly direct the *Cosmopolitan* woman's attention towards her health and body image.

5.1.8 Ideologies

The topic of ideologies does not normally appear in horoscopes. Horoscopical texts hardly ever refer to spiritual values or political issues. Nonetheless, it is possible that through their content, horoscopes smuggle a particular outlook on life, a particular ideology of life, under the radar, so to speak.

The *Cosmopolitan* ideology is more clearly stated in the descriptions of the magazine itself, and is visible in its content, both in paper and online editions. In the horoscopes, it shows, among others, through the promotion of freedom (mainly from men and children), self-improvement and independence, being sociable, tolerant and open to new experiences and people (including foreign cultures), and the concern over the body and sex.

The paradox of this *Cosmopolitan* ideology consists in the fact that the freedom, especially that concerning sexuality, self-management and self-constitution, seems no more than elusive. Yes, women feel tempted by and encouraged to freedom, but at the same time they are faced with dilemmas which are mainly built upon stereotypes. And the other way round, women have to experience the feeling of guilt, anxiety, uneasiness of conscience and low self-esteem in order to be more susceptible to temptations. Thanks to this trick, the beauty myth operates successfully. At the language level, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology may appear fine and liberating. When looking deeper, however, the woman is tied tight to false promises and stereotypical images which are constructed to make sure that she feels bad in the first place.

5.1.9 Miscellaneous

There are a few issues which have not been mentioned yet but which seem worth noticing, especially in the light of the discourse being discussed and the beauty myth. Namely, what may be of particular significance to the study is the myth's message hiding behind the concepts of reputation, identity, (public or online) profile, image/appearance/looks, name and emotions.

Numbers first: the word *reputation* has 18 occurrences (always with reference to the *Cosmopolitan* woman), *profile* – 25 (again, always hers; the way people perceive her either in public or online, or how she wants others to perceive her, what kind of person she is), *identity* – 4, *me-ness* – 1, *image* – 16 (the word occurs more frequently, but 16 times with reference to the *Cosmopolitan* woman's image), to remind, *appearance* – 25, *looks* – 3 (only as a synonym to appearance), *look* – 5 (as a synonymous noun to *appearance*), plus some expressions, such as *the way you look* – 3, *how you feel and look physically* – 1, *how you really look (and how you want to look)* – 1, *the way you look and the way you are seen* – 1, *the way your name or physical appearance looks to other people* – 1, *the way you are seen* – 1, and some related to the above, such as, *the way it looks to other people* – 1 (this one, in fact, referred to the *Cosmopolitan* woman's career or university life, either her position, mission or ambition), *how this particular episode with money, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions looks to the outside world* – 1, *how your values look to other people* – 1, *a person who makes you look good* – 1, *name* – 24 (but only with reference to hers), *emotion* – 18, *emotions* – 10, *emotional* – 30, and *emotionally* – 8, *value* – 3, *values* – 8, .

The concepts listed are usually arranged together in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, which cannot be a pure coincidence. Here are some examples as proof:

Sagittarius December 13 – You probably feel as if you followed a trail that led nowhere, in terms of **your appearance, identity, profile, reputation, name or 'Me' packaging**. That is correct. You did. But the trail will appear again, leading you in a new direction. Or you may decide to take another path, as the old life directions no longer work! By January it's all in the bag. [H-28]

Aquarius December 10 – Anyone who knew the person or situation well (perhaps to the point of being gently cynical) could have given you a little warning about that matter which has let you down. It affected your ideas about **your image, appearance, reputation or public profile**. And now you are left with...what? Actually, you're left with potential. Rethink, later! [H-2]

Gemini January 19 – You have the asteroids Ops and Proserpina in your sign at the moment. **Your appearance, name, public profile, reputation or image** is on the way up. You won't see the full benefits until around your birthday. But you are

so right to keep hoping. The final six months of the year is a relaunch. Right now you have to be a realist. But do keep hoping/trying. [H-346]

Such combination of ideas indicates their close interrelation. Appearance and general image strongly correlate with identity and self-constitution. This is also where the beauty myth shows in the horoscopolical discourse. Namely, this makes the *Cosmopolitan* woman believe that what she looks like (not necessarily in terms of appearance – I actually believe it has a much wider scope and meaning, and rather refers to femininity as such) constitutes her as a person. She is supposed to take care of and reconsider her public profile and reputation, which is confusing when juxtaposed with constant encouragement to use her potential and strive for freedom. She is made to believe that all she *is* in fact, is what she *looks like* in the eyes of other people. The awareness that she is constantly being looked at is strengthened here. This is the beauty myth in pure form. This is no longer self-constitution and self-management, but creation of the self-image in response to the surrounding reality so that it fits in.

The *Cosmopolitan* woman has to control what is being said about her and how other people view her, since her reputation and appearance advertise her. She can learn how to advertise herself well, and she can also compare herself to other women. Let us consider some examples:

Aquarius December 16 – Rather like a gas leak getting under a door, you have been surrounded by particular people over the past few years, who slip into situations which affect the way you are seen, or the way you look. Because this is about your public profile, reputation or appearance (and this is your ‘advertising’) make sure the gas leaks stop. No more confusion. [H-49]

In the horoscope above, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is advised to take care of her reputation which might have been negatively affected by people surrounding her. The message that the way she is seen by other people is extremely important, is very explicitly stated in this horoscope.

The following text, on the other hand, predicts that the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s public image will improve soon, which may entail further benefits – among others, she may mean more to people:

Gemini January 13 – You will expand and improve your public profile after your birthday, and your name or face will either mean more to people, or become the focus for a whole lot of relaunching. It’s too early to call the situation now, but there are some useful people, situations or possibilities floating around. Take full advantage of these and follow them through. [H-313]

Another horoscope yet again reminds and emphasises the significance of appearance and public profile. Even though it seems that the *Cosmopolitan* woman has mastered a lot as far as different aspects of her overall image are concerned, there is always something new to learn. The horoscope also implies that in terms of public profile and appearance, women can be compared to one another.

Libra December 19 – Saturn in Libra has taught you (the long, tricky way!) about all aspects of your appearance, presentation, online profile, promotion or even publicity over the last 18 months. You’ve now mastered quite a lot that eludes other women, even though you may feel you still have L plates on. Right now there’s another mini-lesson to take on board. [H-90]

The next horoscope is confusing in the sense that it first points out the importance of creating the self-image and overall public profile, by actually mentioning them, and then it speaks against conforming to some imposed conventions, with a threat of losing independence and exchanging it for promises:

Scorpio December 26 – Some questions about your public profile, online reputation, face, body or general me-ness are surfacing right now. If you accept a particular situation now on offer, you exchange independence for promises. If you decide against it, then you have spontaneity back in your life, and self-mastery – but you really will be on your own. [H-143]

Summing up the above-mentioned examples, the comparison to other women is again a manifestation of the beauty myth which makes readers think that they have to constantly participate in a kind of life competition (a beauty contest at times) with other women. Of course, a woman can never be sure of the prize, since there is always something more to learn in the field. Moreover, the woman is provided with an elusive promise of independence and freedom. This again brings confusion – on the one hand, the woman is encouraged to freely create her image and, on the other hand, she is cautioned about the way she is seen. In other words, it is as if her value and identity depended on the outer world, even though she is made to believe that it is her who has the agential force.

Another quite frequent concept is that of emotions. Its use repeats and, therefore, consolidates the stereotypical thinking about women as emphatic though emotionally unstable beings. In the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the woman is sometimes advised to listen to her emotional side, though more often it is suggested she keep the emotions in leash. Let us focus on some examples:

Cancer March 9 – For one in three Cancerians, your mum is an issue now. The solution is timeless. In all cases, no matter when your birthday falls, this is a good moment to question your approach to the house, flat, family or flatmates. What are these strong emotions telling you to focus on? [H-805]

The horoscope above implies that emotions may help the *Cosmopolitan* woman to decide what to concentrate on in terms of her home and family matters.

The next example is slightly different: the woman is advised not to be too emotional and to work out a sensible strategy instead:

Cancer March 7 – Let's face it, communication could be a great deal easier than it is right now. Your concern may be about the internet, or the real world, but things will become easier in about four weeks. For the moment, respond to the rising emotions with a sensible strategy. It will work. [H-781]

Similarly, according to the following horoscope, too emotional or too personal reactions to certain matters may lead the *Cosmopolitan* woman astray:

Scorpio February 22 – If you keep drifting, emotionally or personally, you will end up so far out that it may be hard to manage. This may be your past, present or potential partner (or the world of other people's children) – but you must come back to what is real, and familiar – or float away! [H-622]

To sum up, the content of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes may sound liberating and empowering, but it is still inescapably based on stereotypes. The encoded interrelation between identity and appearance (or her reputation or profile in the eyes of other people) strengthens the beauty myth. Emotions are sometimes viewed as a friend, sometimes as an enemy, but they are still present as a stereotypical female characteristic.

5.1.10 Summary

The image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman (or someone aspiring to be one) that the horoscopolical texts alone reveal, turns out to be quite stereotypical – the woman is emotional, her temper and sexual appetite is hard to control, she is close to family and to people in general, children are often part of her reality, she is supposed to take care with her image, men can make her feel secure and her life more comfortable. Obviously, this comes naturally to horoscopes as a specific genre, and is inevitable. Moreover, overgeneralisations are a necessity in horoscopes. However, though the *Cosmopolitan* ideology promotes fun, freedom and fearlessness, there

are still visible certain contradictions and stereotypical images in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

What also results from the specificity of the genre is the fact that the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes often have an advisory character and an encouraging tone. This agrees with the *Cosmopolitan* ideology of empowering women, supporting their potential and self-esteem. And so the *Cosmopolitan* woman is aware of the need to learn and of the benefits of being financially independent. She learns at school as well as by collecting experiences through exploring the world, including foreign cultures, and by observing people around her. She has a profession (or is studying to have one) and a job. She is also supposed to be a free spirit. She does not seem to have children or a husband, although partners or lovers exist in her reality.

If the abovementioned issues are combined, it turns out that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is constantly exposed to multiple dilemmas, most of which concern her broadly understood femaleness and sexuality. Paradoxically, this confusion seems to disagree with the *Cosmopolitan* ideology. And this same confusion, created in the discourse here analysed, may fuel the beauty myth.

5.2 Lexical density and readability

Much of the quantitative description has already been included in *Chapter 4* (specifically, in subchapter 4.7, in which the author presents general quantitative data concerning the corpus) and earlier in *Chapter 5*, in the discussion of the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, which is done to reveal the tendencies in the horoscopes and to support the author's statements.

The present subchapter focuses on other calculations which may prove useful to decipher the profile of *Cosmopolitan* women as target audience. The factors discussed here are, therefore, lexical density and readability.

5.2.1 Lexical density

The programme estimated lexical density, i.e. the complexity factor, at 12.9%. Lexical density shows how easy or difficult a text is. In order to calculate it, a distinction has to be made between content (or lexical) words (i.e. nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) and grammatical (or functional) words (i.e. pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, numerals, determiners, interjections). In general, the first group of words carries information, while the other is intended to bind a text together. Lexical density is measured according to the following formula suggested by Stubbs (1996: 71-73):

$$\text{Lexical density} = (\text{number of lexical words} / \text{total number of words}) \times 100$$

Lexical density is, therefore, the ratio of the number of content words to the total number of words. The lower the density, the more easy it is to read and understand a text. Therefore, in the case of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the estimated result comes from the following calculation:

$$12.9\% = (4433/34371) \times 100$$

According to Ure (1971: 443-452), written texts tend to manifest a lexical density of over 40 per cent, whereas spoken texts are more likely to be under 40 per cent. The researcher claims that spoken texts are more predictable since they are more likely to focus on the immediate physical environment of a person and, therefore, tend to contain more repetitions (: 443-452). In contrast, written texts are less restricted and, because of this, they tend to be less predictable.

In the case of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the low percentage indicates that the texts are easy. And this factor agrees with the specificity of horoscopes as a genre. Even though horoscopes are written texts, they have a repetitive character, limited register differentiation, concern predictable subjects of everyday conversations (as proved in the previous content analysis) and are intended to meet the requirements of media and press discourse meant for its specific community.

It must be emphasized, however, that the result of the calculation mentioned here is the result of the whole corpus calculation. The same calculation conducted for an individual *Cosmopolitan* horoscope would with high probability in each case give a significantly higher estimation, with a tendency to reach over 40 per cent, i.e. a more likely result for written texts. To prove this regularity, as estimated with the use of online-utility.org [WWW₁₁], lexical density of an exemplar *Cosmopolitan* horoscope quoted below equals 82.5397:

Taurus January 16 – Your former, current or potential partner is at the heart of big questions. You have to be honest and say there are two kinds of Taurus women. One kind would rather commit to a man because of the status and comfort – not to mention the property or lifestyle gains. Another kind has totally different values and loves her freedom, wildness and oxygen. [H-335]

To sum up, *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes seem to be consistent with the characteristics of written texts in terms of lexical density. When an individual horoscope is analysed, the factor

is much higher, but this mostly results from the accumulation of lexical words which are intended to create a specific pseudo-scientific tone. Additionally, lexical words must to some extent compensate for the concise form. This fact, however, does not prejudge the difficulty of their reception. As the analysis of the whole corpus reveals, *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are easy texts to understand. The horoscopes in question exhibit an extremely repetitive character. Their content is predictable and their register differentiation is very limited. As part of media discourse, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes must reach a very broad and diversified audience, even though unified under the *Cosmopolitan* brand.

5.2.2 Reading ease

As far as reading ease is concerned, textalyser.net [WWW₁₀] estimated readability according to the Gunning fog index at 6.6, with the indication that an estimation around 6 means ‘easy’ and 20 means ‘hard’. Readability refers to the ease with which a particular text is or may be understood by its readers and depends on its content and typography. The content refers to the complexity of vocabulary and syntax used. Typography is connected with the visual appearance of a text in question, such as font style or size. According to *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* by Richards and Schmidt et al. (2002: 442), readability means “how easily written materials can be read and understood. Readability depends on many factors, including (a) the average length of sentences in a passage (b) the number of new words a passage contains (c) the grammatical complexity of the language used.” The fog index created by Gunning (1952) allows the calculation of readability with the following algorithm:

$$\text{The fog index} = 0.4 [(words/sentences) + 100 (complex words/words)]$$

As with any tool of this kind, the Gunning fog index also has limitations. Not all complex words are difficult, and the number of syllables does not necessarily determine complexity. Indeed, on the other hand, there are short words which turn out to be difficult. The calculation that textalyser.net [WWW₁₀] must have made is as follows:

$$6.6 = 0.4 [(34371/4594) + 100 (3100/34371)]$$

The result achieved again indicates that the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are easy texts for reception.

In conclusion, according to the presented data and calculations, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes stick to structural genre indicators in terms of their form – they are short and concise pieces of text. They also constitute easy content for the intended audience to read and understand, as density and readability measures reveal. This again does not surprise though – horoscopes in general are supposed to be so by their very nature. The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are meant to have as wide reception from the audience as possible. Though the targeted discourse community is unified under one gender and age range, they come from diversified backgrounds and have diversified experiences. This requires a linguistic compromise that *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes probably try to reach, among others, in this very way.

5.3 Discourse participants and context

Having analysed the content of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, it is now important to discuss other significant aspects of the discourse. The horoscopolical content is crucial to realise what image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman is revealed by the texts themselves. A few words about all discourse participants must first be mentioned in order to give a broader perspective of the problem in question. Furthermore, as assumed in the theoretical part of the dissertation, discourse equals text plus context. This is why both the immediate and further context requires proper investigation as well.

5.3.1 Discourse participants

The horoscopolical discourse participants take part in a specific act of communication which involves a particular interrelation between them. To remind ourselves, utterances involve a specific sender of a message and its receiver. However, horoscopes as a genre involve the concept of an author, a group of typical addressees and the relation between them. The overall structure of the texts in terms of lexis or grammar depends on the type of contact, the level of familiarity and closeness between the participants (a kind of intimacy between them) as well as roles ascribed to them, the roles that contribute to the shaping of the world of horoscopes as a specific genre.

A typical model of communication in the case of horoscopes involves one sender and a group of addressees. The sender is usually a member of the editorial office or a person who

collaborates with the magazine. The addressees are the magazine readers who are a kind of collective unit. In the case of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in the online edition of the magazine, the sender of astrological forecasts is an astrologer – Jessica Adams – who has worked with different magazines (*Elle* and *Vogue*) and is the author of two publications on astrology, as one can discover at the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website [WWW₁₂]. The intended magazine readers, on the other hand, are young women – the core target are women aged 18 to 35 according to the data on the magazine profile [WWW₁₃].

The contact between the sender and the addressees is through the publication – in this case these are horoscopes published in the online edition of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine. The sender's knowledge about the addressees is based on experience and knowledge of the world as well as of knowledge of the magazine's profile and its ideology. Since the group of the readers is huge and diversified, and the contact between the sender and them is not direct, there are many generalisations in the forecast texts, which are manifested mainly through lexis and multiple metaphors. The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes resonate with abstract words, often even a few concepts listed together. Metaphors are also frequent.

In this specific act of communication in the horoscopolical discourse, the participants take on some typical roles, which fosters the eventual aim of communication. The sender of the horoscopolical message, therefore, must seem competent in the field of astrology and human psyche. This must be seen in the astrological forecast, again through the language used. Sometimes there is information provided about the astrologer. The *Cosmopolitan* magazine website presents an image of the *Cosmo* astrologer and, additionally, refers whoever is interested to the astrologer's personal website. The addressee, on the other hand, takes on the role of a person who is interested in their future and eager to undertake the issues the horoscopes suggest.

Discourse participants can be considered as participants of a particular act of communication, as presented above. However, discourse society is not necessarily limited to the participants mentioned. In much broader understanding, it may be assumed that it includes anyone who, in any way, contributes to or responds to the discourse in question. Apart from members of the editorial office, journalists, essayists, specialists, other people collaborating with the magazine and the target audience, the most influential cell is advertisers. It is mainly thanks to the latter that the beauty myth operates so successfully in the discourse.

Advertisers create a utopian vision of the world and a specific image of the woman for a reason. The reason is exclusively business-and-money-oriented. It has nothing to do with women. The images (linguistic or non-linguistic in character) are nothing but a tool. They

constitute an essential component of the beauty myth. The audience, on the other hand, is supposed to respond in a specific way which will legitimate the myth (and as a consequence, of course, increase the profit - the advertiser's profit).

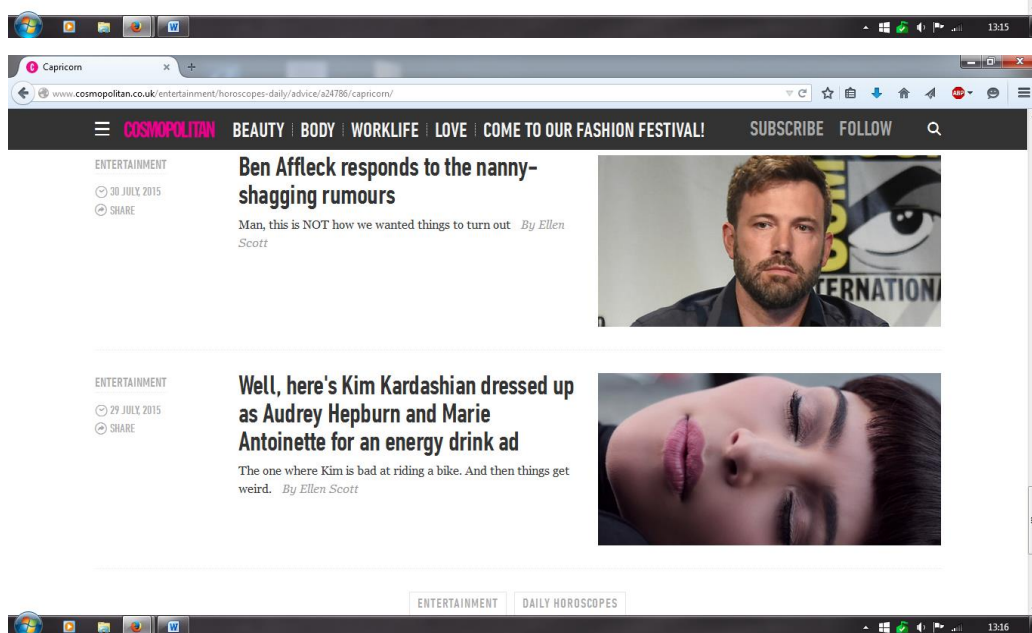
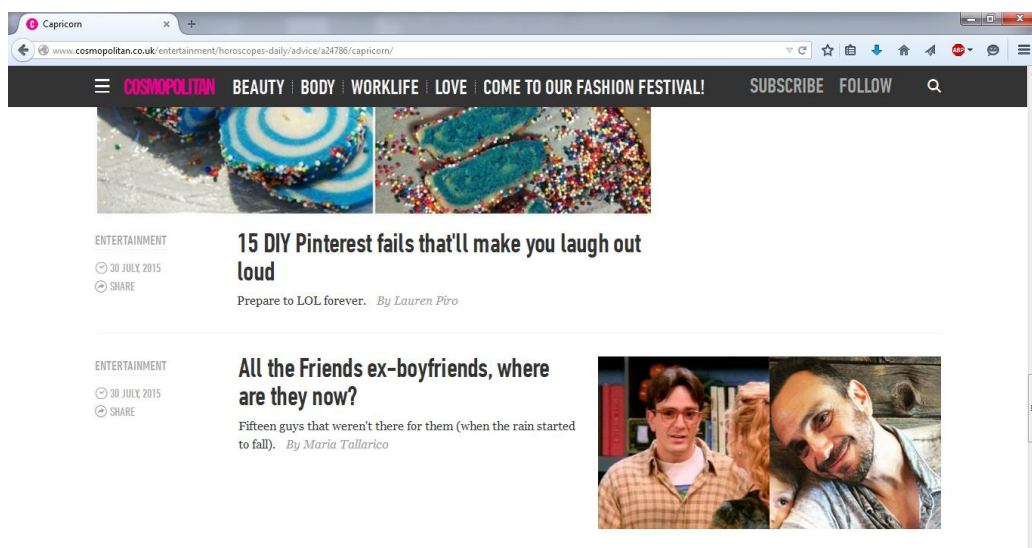
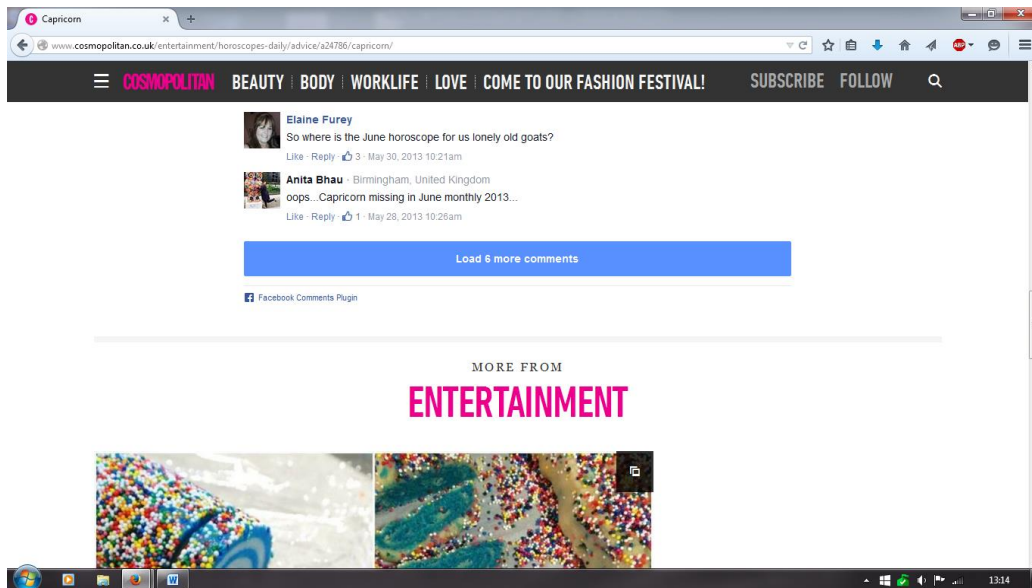
To sum up, all the members of the *Cosmopolitan* discourse community are tightly interrelated to one another. They take up different roles in the discourse. It is through the linguistic and visual images created in the discourse that the beauty myth operates. *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are one of the representations of this discourse.

5.3.2 Context as the key to discourse comprehension

Discourse equals text plus context. Both are equally important and closely interrelated. The content of horoscopes is embedded in the immediate context of the website it is published on, in the further context of the whole *Cosmopolitan* online edition of the magazine that imposes a certain ideology, and, finally, within a particular socio-cultural context of a consumerist character.

The immediate context of a given *Cosmopolitan* daily horoscope consists of a few elements. These elements contribute to the creation and perception of the entire discourse of the beauty myth within *Cosmopolitan* pages. They also constitute an interrelated whole together with the very texts of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. The elements complement one another in order to achieve a possibly most effective persuasive aim. They include a variety of visual images and texts, whose message is apparently consistent with the *Cosmopolitan* ideology of fun, fearlessness and success.

Once the *Horoscopes* bookmark is clicked on, and once an appropriate Zodiac sign is chosen, the reader is forwarded to their horoscope. To make it more illustrative, here is what it looks like – an exemplary material accessed on 30th July, 2015 at the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website [WWW₂₈] showing one page from top to bottom:



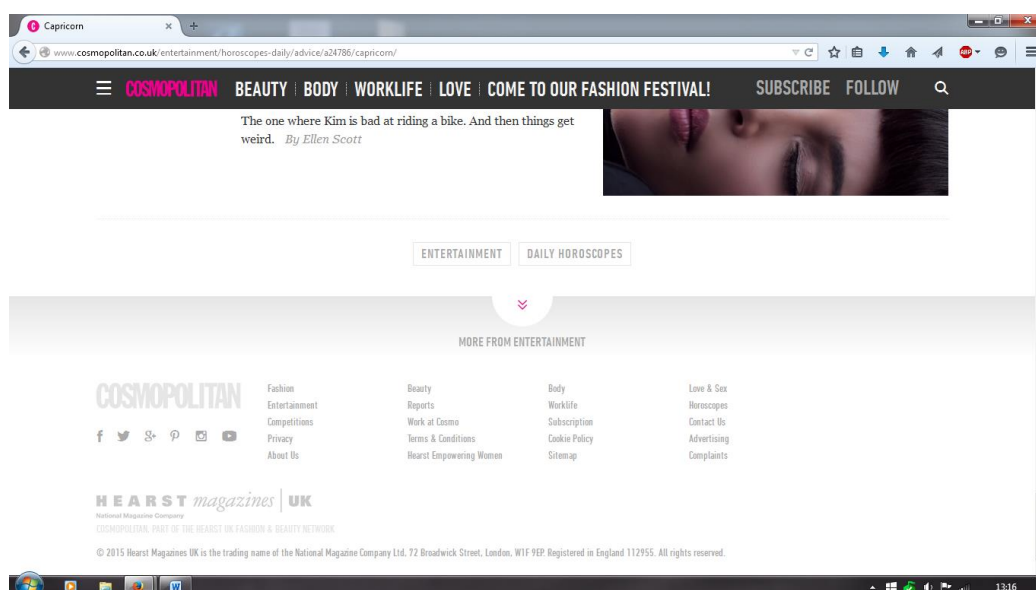


Figure 5 A top-to-bottom screenshot of a *Cosmopolitan* webpage

The sample above illustrates quite clearly the overall profile of *Cosmopolitan*. It allows to suppose what the *Cosmopolitan* values are. A statement can even be risked that they mostly come under the headings in the main menu. This would mean that what the *Cosmopolitan* ideology values most is, among others, beauty, body, successful career, love and fashion. The horoscopolical messages must fit this overall *Cosmopolitan* profile, whose part they are.

Let us focus on the immediate surrounding of a *Cosmopolitan* horoscope then. Together with a date, the text of the horoscope is more or less in the middle of the page at the top, immediately under a large image of the Zodiac sign. Above, at the very top of the page, from left to right, there are the following: an icon for an additional menu (which appears on the left if chosen), bookmarks entitled *Cosmopolitan*, *Beauty*, *Body*, *Worklife*, *Love*, *Come to our Fashion Festival!*, *Subscribe*, *Follow* and a search icon. Once the first icon is chosen, there appears a list of the following bookmarks: *Fashion*, *Beauty*, *Body*, *Love & Sex*, *Cosmo Reports*, *Entertainment*, *Worklife*, *Win*, *Follow*, *Subscribe*, *Newsletter* and *Life Events*. At the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website [WW28], with the access date of 30th July, 2015, it looks as follows:

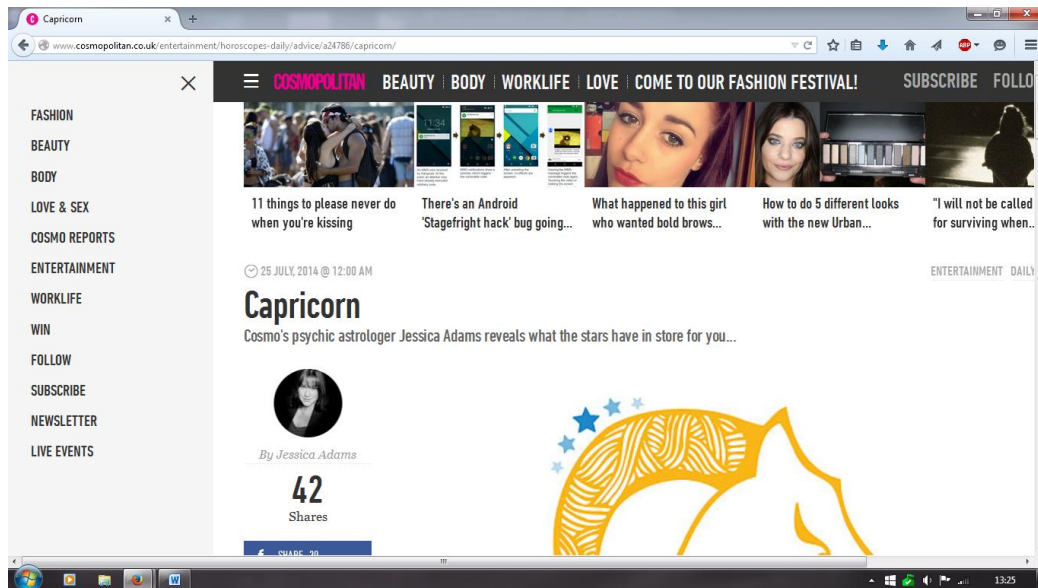


Figure 6 A screenshot of the immediate context of a Cosmopolitan horoscope

Immediately underneath the main bookmark bar, there are five photographs with headings which may lead the reader to articles on the topics shown. These change regularly and usually concern celebrities, fashion, body, sex, beauty and the like. Below these, on the left, there is the name of a given Zodiac sign, information that “Cosmo’s psychic astrologer Jessica Adams reveals what the stars have in store for you...” with her photograph, and links to Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. These and an email icon also appear just below the actual horoscope text. Underneath, under the heading *We Recommend*, there are four more Zodiac signs to choose. And then, under the heading *What do You Think?*, the readers may give their opinions and comment on the horoscopolical content. Under that, there are a few photos with titles from the *Entertainment* bookmark, which let the reader quickly reach some entertaining articles. At the bottom of the web page, there is again a list of bookmarks (some of which reappear for the third time: *Fashion, Beauty, Body, Love & Sex, Entertainment, Reports, Worklife, Horoscopes, Competitions, Work at Cosmo, Subscription, Contact Us, Privacy, Terms & Conditions, Cookie Policy, Advertising, About Us, Hearst Empowering Women, Sitemap* and *Complaints*), icons for different social media sites, the logos of *Cosmopolitan* and *Hearst Magazines UK* and a copyright notice.

It can be observed, therefore, that the immediate context of a given horoscope clearly indicates its affiliation with or at least very close relation to entertainment. It is not meant to be treated too seriously. The images and texts that build an immediate context to the horoscopes provide the reader with light topics, meant rather for fun than for any serious

consideration. The social media sites icons and the *What do You Think?* section encourage the sharing of thoughts, but they rarely provoke serious discussions, if at all.

The whole *Cosmopolitan* magazine website is designed in the same fashion. The very top and the very bottom are always the same. There is the main bookmark bar at the top of each page, under the names cited above. At the bottom, there is a longer list of bookmarks, the logos and the copyright notice. The same articles reappear in different bookmarks. They are usually quite short and concern various topics ranging from celebrities, beauty treatments, fashion, or sex to career and work life. It must be pointed out, however, that though the *Worklife* bookmark might suggest somewhat more serious topics, there are mostly trivial articles meant more for entertainment and fun than to provide any useful information on work or financial issues. Some articles present life stories meant to be inspiring for women, some give advice on a variety of matters, still others enumerate reasons, rules, tips and the like, but hardly ever anything precise and specific. Instead, every story is supported with a photograph related in one way or another to the article's content. Surfing the website, the reader keeps encountering the same images and articles over and over again.

The content of the *Cosmopolitan* website, therefore, is in fact very limited. It includes only a few topics which in any case do not seem to be treated seriously. The images and headlines are meant to be provoking and catchy, but the value of the articles themselves is highly questionable. Although *Cosmopolitan* claims to be inspiring and pro-woman, it does not seem to treat them seriously, since the content offered is hardly ever serious in any way. It is maintained in a light fashion. The issues of body, sexuality or career are, paradoxically, trivialised. Again, it is this trivialisation in the *Cosmopolitan* discourse of which the beauty myth takes advantage. The *Cosmopolitan* world is inviting, but it only offers superficial freedom and self-development.

The consumerist society largely focuses on goods and entertainment that sell. The *Cosmopolitan* ideology conforms to the consumptionist market rules. It provides entertainment in the first place, decorated with advertisements and packed with beauty-body-sex-fashion-and-career tips.

In conclusion, the context to the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes is mainly entertainment, which they are themselves. The issues that the horoscopes touch overlap with the *Cosmopolitan* issues in general, which agrees with the specificity of horoscopes as a genre. Both the immediate and further context reveals the consumerist character of the *Cosmopolitan* ideology.

5.4 Manifestations of women's language in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes

The use of women's language in the discourse of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes may prove beneficial in terms of persuasiveness. Its presence in this discourse may be strictly connected with the specificity of discourse community. First of all, women are target readers. Using their language may guarantee the sense of trust, understanding and solidarity. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that, as the editors declare, the horoscopes are, in fact, written by a woman astrologer – Jessica Adams. If so, it can be assumed with a great deal of certainty that the horoscopes do, indeed, manifest at least some features of women's language. Not only are the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes addressed to women and written by a woman, but they also speak of women and of different aspects of their life.

In order to be as persuasive as possible, it is reasonable for horoscopes to create and maintain a close, friendly, almost intimate relationship between the writer and the reader, although the writer has to simultaneously manifest her authority as a specialist in the field of astrology. That compromise between these two conditions is completely possible, which is proved by *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. On the whole, the language used is an example of woman speech, since it is actually written by a woman, but the woman takes and shows the position of an expert by, for example, using appropriate register connected with the names of Zodiac signs, planets, stars or constellations. Now, if these two aims are achieved, the reader's alertness may be lowered and this may provide plenty of room for action for the beauty myth.

Focus on relationships is more likely in women's language, whereas putting oneself in the position of an expert is rather a men's language indicator. However, the horoscopical discourse has an advisory character rather than a purely informative one. The style of horoscopical texts is not at all authoritarian, in the sense that it denies any protests or objections. The horoscopes resemble pieces of friendly advice, written in informal style as if taken from a woman-to-woman conversation.

Some selected, noticeable manifestations typical of women's language in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes as compared to Lakoff's (1975) findings are as follows:

- weak expletives – on the whole, they occur very rarely, probably because of the context – it is inappropriate to use swear words, even in their weak form, in a popular magazine. *Oh dear* occurred only once:

Cancer March 15 – If you ran away from a potential lover because he or she was too powerful – **oh dear**. You can have another attempt now, but you'll have to pay respect. Settled? You two need to redefine whose turn it is to be in charge. [H-877]

But the word *damn* was used twice in the corpus:

Taurus March 20 – Why is everyone around you being so **damn** radical? It's like you're surrounded by wannabe revolutionaries, and some of them are even staging a one-person revolution, all by themselves. Meet them halfway? Is it possible? Oh yes... [H-927]

Virgo February 15 – What you're being told, with your former, current or potential partner, is this – 'There are no limits until something or someone calls a halt.' There is something very punk rock about your love life at the moment, even if you're single. Chiron in Pisces, which is influencing you now, always tempts people to be audacious and try the so-called impossible. Got an enemy, though? Take care. He/she will try **damn** anything. [H-545]

- trivializing adjectives – these occur quite often and their variety is relatively great (e.g. *divine* – 1 occurrence, *sweet(er)* - 3, *lovely* – 6, *fantastic* – 3, *wonderful* – 5, *miraculously* – 1, *delightful* – 1, *beautiful(ly)* - 2); selected examples below:

Pisces March 8 – To see yourself as other people see you, is a huge advantage. It's the only way you're going to attain the required sense of detachment about your reputation or appearance. This will assist you, as you plunge into something which looks like such a **divine** alternative. [H-786]

Pisces March 26 – You'd obviously like things to be radically different with a family member or flatmate/live-in partner. Or is it the house or flat? Developing your best-ever personality strengths to deal with it makes life that much **sweeter** from June. [H-978]

Sagittarius December 15 – You are quite right to be optimistic about a potential lover (or a good source for a possible new relationship.) Within six months you will either go further with this person or situation – or there will be a **lovely** connection springing forth, that guides you to the partnership you deserve. Coupled up and happy? You two are going to go further... [H-40]

Pisces March 6 – Your way with words or images could take you higher, further (faster!) The right person to move ahead with you is by your side today. It seems you're also entertaining **fantastic** possibilities about your own name, face, body or style. It's just what you need. But is it real? [H-762]

- intensifier *so* – its use is very frequent; in the function of an intensifier it was used 165 times in the corpus

Aquarius March 10 – There isn't an Aquarian woman alive who doesn't long to travel, to express herself on the internet, to learn more about the world, or to explore people whose backgrounds are **so** fascinatingly different. So why is it all **so** hard? Answer: look at how you're handling it! [H-809]

Scorpio March 13 – Your former, current or potential partner is giving you the key to the door marked ‘Opportunity’. You could learn **so** much more, or travel **so** much further. This person is at a stage in his/her life when the same old thing won’t suffice. [H-849]

Scorpio February 2 – The money, the property, the business or the precious possessions? Which must you give more time and space to? The interesting thing is the role of the person, or organisation, which is now answering to both sides. The mood has changed too. It’s **so** promising. **So** hopeful. You have a lot to work with and think about over the next day or two. [H-413]

- hedges and fillers – although only one occurrence of *kind of* was found, the word *well* as a filler is very frequent (33 occurrences); it has to be remembered, however, that hedging may manifest itself in a range of ways, such as, for example, the use of modal expressions, some verbs or structures involving tense and aspect, and so it happens in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. As for hedges, being less direct also overlaps with the specificity of horoscopes as a genre. However, a thorough investigation of these would go beyond the scope of this work. Here are only a few examples:

Virgo February 29 – Your career, university life or non-profit role is about as lively and surprising as a stuck CD. If you knew that it would all stop in August, though, after which your chances of promotion or a hot new position skyrocketed – **well**. **Kind of** makes it easier to smile and deal with it. [H-708]

Leo March 6 – **Well**, this is new. Someone has a career, university or voluntary goal which neatly dovetails with your own ambition. This is now a double act, it’s official. The other intriguing possibility is a financial, business or property escape route. But you must know where the limits are. [H-768]

Sagittarius December 28 – You **could say** that your greatest chance of running the world in 2012 lies in running the money, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions. Or **maybe** you just want to run your world? Or his, hers or theirs? It’s okay to have a secret like this at the moment. And you’re only human! But is there a cool way? A clever, balanced way? [H-164]

- rising intonation in declaratives – this is indicated with a question mark at the end of a declarative statement; in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes this mostly serves the function of reducing the level of certainty, which is typical in horoscopes anyway, expanding a list of possibilities that may allegedly occur, and is a fail-safe way to make statements

Scorpio February 19 – Maybe your dynasty is a long way off. It’s going to depend on the right guy (or sperm donor), correct? **Or finding a dad to date?** In other cases, it can feel as if the dynasty is right here. It’s manifesting through a young relative or godchild, or through kids you have a professional or charity involvement with. Whatever your personal situation tonight, Keep It Really Real! [H-586]

Virgo December 18 – A person who is used to going between two powerful individuals, organisations or ‘worlds’ has been around to assist you with your career, or life at university, in December. He or she is still plugged into the situation. From June 2012 the seeds of what you are sowing now will produce incredible harvests. **Promotion? Hot new job? Big results?** [H-79]

- tag questions to express opinion – only one occurrence found

Aries December 27 – Scientists and multimedia boffins are not solely devoted to your relaunch, renaissance or rebirth at the moment. Oh no, **they’ve got far better things to do – haven’t they?** But it’s odd how you keep stumbling across the newest of the new, when thinking about how you want the world to see you and receive you. And all of it is potentially life-changing. [H-160]

- precise colour discriminations – not found in the corpus

- mitigated requests – horoscopes do not tend to make requests, they provide instructions and advice; thus, imperative statements are very frequent, in almost every horoscope.

All the above is no more than a cursory study intended to show that manifestations of women’s language can be found in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes and to indicate its possible causes and effects, which are inextricably connected with the discourse community. Further research into this topic would go beyond the scope of the present work, but to mention it seems crucial as it is closely linked to the problem matter and indicates yet another aspect which may constitute an interesting topic for an in-depth exploration in another research.

5.5 Language of success as the fabric of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes

Having presented the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, their context, the sender of the message and the intended audience, it is now time to investigate their form in more detail. Some aspects concerning linguistic means have already been mentioned when describing the content. After all, the words and expressions used in the texts constitute an important part of the horoscopolical language as such (their collection and statistics indicate the scope and the fields they concern, or the readability factors) and a sample of the *Cosmopolitan* language of success, so to speak, that shows particular tendencies which build up the *Cosmopolitan* ideology through the use of specific register.

The *Cosmopolitan* ideology aspires to unify young, modern, professional women who are not afraid to take challenges, enjoy themselves sexually and live their lives on their own

terms, who are not dependent on men in any way, have the right to control their body and physical beauty. This allows us to assume that *Cosmopolitan* women are women who celebrate their freedom in every aspect of their life, who are successful and self-fulfilled, who are happy with who they are and what surrounds them because it is they who create this reality.

This success-happiness-and-freedom-oriented *Cosmopolitan* ideology, built upon the omnipresent discourse of success, is very inviting and tempting. It gains masses of followers, especially among young people.

In *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the concept of success and happiness is also noticeable and obviously manifests itself through language. The specificity of the genre itself makes the horoscopes announce forthcoming positive changes, optimistic visions of the future, successful outcomes to various endeavours or happy endings to worrisome situations. Negative horoscopes do not really exist. Obviously, some caution against possible failure, hard times or problematic situations, but they rarely preordain misfortune specifically. Still others advise taking well-considered decisions or rethinking certain issues, which takes the responsibility for what might happen from the horoscope divination and places it on its reader. Sometimes, to compensate for disadvantages, horoscopes encourage some hedonism and simple pleasures. They often speak of potential to be explored. In a sense, horoscopes, indeed, inform about socially acceptable and desirable patterns of behaviour. And they make promises.

To prove the above with some *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, let us cite a few:

Gemini December 10 – It probably feels as if you are surfing, slipping and sliding at the moment – at least with life at university, or in terms of special ideas and projects, both online and offline. Maybe travel is involved, too, or people from other regions or nationalities. Like a fish, something/someone just wriggled away. But **expect another chance, in a new way**. [H-10]

The above horoscope implies the woman may be experiencing adversity in her university life, but it also promises a positive change in the form of a new chance.

Another text, on the other hand, mentions there have been some obstacles that may have negatively influenced the *Cosmopolitan* woman's reputation or appearance, but she now has some potential at her disposal, so that she can considerably improve the situation. The only thing that she has to do is to rethink the matter and approach the problem in a sensible way.

Aquarius December 10 – Anyone who knew the person or situation well (perhaps to the point of being gently cynical) could have given you a little warning about that matter which has let you down. It affected your ideas about your image, appearance, reputation or public profile. And now you are left with...what? Actually, **you're left with potential. Rethink, later!** [H-2]

Another horoscope also advises some more consideration of a specific situation. The *Cosmopolitan* woman is encouraged to rethink all the advantages and disadvantages of being committed to a man and of being a free spirit before she makes her final decision:

Taurus December 17 – **You have some thinking to do**, about your partner, former partner or potential partner. There may also be a rival, opponent or enemy in the works. Basically, **tis the season to think** about how much of a free spirit you want to be. **Your awareness of the pros and cons** of a commitment looks very high. Security is on offer but what about independence? [H-71]

The reader must identify with their horoscope and find nothing in its content that would unmask the message as false. To achieve this, various kinds of stereotypes become useful – gender stereotypes or those of a Zodiac sign. Unifying the readers under a Zodiac sign is characteristic. Overgeneralisations, abstract vocabulary and metaphors that allow for multiple interpretations are also frequent. Please see examples:

Virgo January 4 – **You Virgo women need your daily routine**. It's a mixture of work, lifestyle, what to eat, what to drink, how to sleep, how to exercise (or not!) For the last few years though all you've had is one wave of confusion after another. And here's another one! Never mind. You'll cruise on through. And your reward is February, when your life firms up and clears up. [H-227] [H-239]

The horoscope above assigns a stereotypical feature to the women unified under the Virgo sign, claiming that all Virgo women need their daily routine. The next example is the same, only it concerns Leo women and it maintains that they are all facing a personal or professional challenge at present:

Leo January 3 – What's at the top of your mountain? You may want to star in *The Sound of Music*. Or climb Everest. Or just climb to the top of your profession or company. **Every Leo woman** has a big personal agenda right now. There is no point in going higher (which you will) unless it feels safe, though. And comfortable. And cosy. And that's why today is so important. [H-216]

The following two horoscopes, on the other hand, are more careful with statistics – of course they overgeneralise to a great extent, but this time they argue that only one in three

women unified under a particular sign is going to experience what the horoscopolical message predicts.

Cancer March 9 – **For one in three Cancerians**, your mum is an issue now. The solution is timeless. In all cases, no matter when your birthday falls, this is a good moment to question your approach to the house, flat, family or flatmates. What are these strong emotions telling you to focus on? [H-805]

Capricorn March 5 – **One in three Capricorn women** are up for a new relationship, with someone to help from today. In other cases your main question is about the house, share household, flat or family. Change is the answer! It will come more easily from April 22. For now, expect delays. [H-751]

Another text presents the use of the metaphor that may fit various contexts – it can be interpreted in terms of a situation which is continuously, though imperceptibly, getting worse and which may escalate to the extent that may eventually lead to sudden negative outcomes. The horoscope escapes specifying what exactly the problem may concern, it only indicates the general issues of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's house or family.

Sagittarius February 22 – It's best to catch these things early on. A new situation affecting the house, family, flat or share household is building up around you. **The drip-drip-drip in the bucket is subtle, but sooner or later, the bucket can fill and a situation can spill over.** Time to manage this? [H-621]

Horoscopolical texts must seem authentic and to come from an authority and a specialist in astrology. In the case of *Cosmopolitan*, the astrologer is introduced with her name and general profile, plus information on the astrologer's publications in the field. Additionally, the language of horoscopes includes clues that are meant to manifest their authenticity. The specific horoscopolical register includes names of celestial bodies (the Moon, the Sun, planets and asteroids), Zodiac signs or houses of horoscope. Such linguistic treatments in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes do not serve any cognitive purpose, however, only persuasive.

The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopolical prophecies are usually contained within only a few relatively short sentences, most often between three and five. And it is within this little linguistic form that the content must be persuasive enough. To make it so, the astrologer uses the second person singular or addresses the *Cosmopolitan* women unified under the same sign collectively, which is, by the way, one of the manifestations of the language of success.

Categorical and outright predictions about the future are avoided in horoscopes through the use of modal structures and indefinite pronouns. To some extent, this also

manifests through predictions in the form of questions or the presentation of different alternatives for future actions.

Informing the reader about forthcoming success or positive solutions to problematic issues with very general language allows for a great deal of interpretation. Firstly, the concept of success is wide enough to apply to various fields of life. Secondly, the abstract character of the issues mentioned leaves at least so much interpretative freedom as well. The word *success* does not show any spectacular frequency in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. It appears eight times, plus two occurrences of the word *successfully*. Nevertheless, the concept is often present. It may hide in a whole range of expressions, such as for instance: *solution(s)* – 18 occurrences, *(re)solve* in different grammatical forms – 12 occurrences, *opportunity(-ies)* – 31 occurrences, *benefit(s)* – 12 occurrences, *beneficial* – 1 occurrence, *possibility(-ies)* – 38 occurrences, *promise(s)* (as a form of the noun or verb) – 23 occurrences, *progress* – 15 occurrences, *improvement(s)* – 8 occurrences, *improve(s/d)* – 8 occurrences, *development(s)* – 10 occurrences, *develop(ing)* – 10 occurrences, or other descriptions of positive outcomes in the form of metaphors. Not to mention the changes and revolutions that the horoscopes frequently announce or encourage to: *change* (as a verb or noun) – 95 occurrences, *changes* (as the plural form of the noun or the third singular form of the verb) – 27 occurrences, *changing* – 5 occurrences, *life-changing* – 3 occurrences, *revolution* – 18 occurrences, *revolutionary* – 5 occurrences, *revolutionaries* – 1 occurrence.

To sum up, the form of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes comes down to simple and short texts that manifest all the features characteristic of horoscopes as a genre in general – short sentences, specific register, persuasive style, the use of modals, abstract vocabulary and metaphors. Above all, however, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes manifest all the features of the language of success, to which the above information is but an introduction. As a reminder, there are five of them: (1) *the feature of immediateness and exceptionality*, (2) *the feature of patternisation and logoisation*, (3) *the feature of accelerated pulse*, (4) *the feature of affinity*, and (5) *the feature of technicisation and professionalisation*. The features are shown through a range of linguistic indicators at lexical, syntactic and discourse levels. It is possible that they all appear in a single text simultaneously, though this is not always the case. Nevertheless, it can be presumed that the more indicators of success in a given text, the more persuasive or attractive it may seem to its audience. Below, there are described some linguistic manifestations of the features together with selected examples from the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

5.5.1 Feature of immediateness and exceptionality

The feature of immediateness and exceptionality basically refers to an intense striving to grasp exclusive rights to the audience's attention and to persuade them that it is this particular moment, now, that counts. The focus is on the pace through which a certain message is transferred to the audience which, on the other hand, is supposed to respond to it as fast as possible. The readers must have an impression that the message is addressed specifically to them and requires an immediate action on their part. They cannot, however, have a feeling of constraint and top-down compulsion. This is why the message must be constructed so that the offer or promise appears too attractive to be rejected.

The linguistic indicators of the feature in question have to turn the reader's attention towards the exceptionality of the present moment and positive changes that are about to happen. In the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the following linguistic indicators which reveal the feature of immediateness and exceptionality can be found: the use of present tenses, the use of imperative mood, the use of different time expressions, the use of sequences of synonymous words, and the use of comparative and superlative forms of adjectives.

5.5.1.1 Present tenses

The use of present tenses in horoscopes is meant to turn attention towards what matters now or what is of importance to what is to come soon. What is happening now, what decisions are being made or should be made now, what current circumstances are to assist one's actions and their future – all such information encourages the taking of quick action with a hope of promising results to come sooner or later. Let us consider some examples:

Leo December 18 – You know you're right about a group project. It promises big things, and these will unfold from June next year. In the meantime, you keep being thrown back into the same revolving door – with the same old stuff every time. This too will improve in 2012. In fact, it's over by September. For now, though, make the most of a person who's so well-placed. [H-80]

Virgo December 18 – A person who is used to going between two powerful individuals, organisations or 'worlds' has been around to assist you with your career, or life at university, in December. He or she is still plugged into the situation. From June 2012 the seeds of what you are sowing now will produce incredible harvests. Promotion? Hot new job? Big results? [H-79]

In the first of the above examples, the reader is confirmed in their present approach and promised some benefits in the future if they continue with it (although overwhelmingly

more horoscopes suggest changes). The present situation is not perfect however – the horoscope describes metaphorically what disturbance is happening at the same time, and immediately reassures the reader that the threat is about to lessen. The other horoscope describes the current state of matters and the circumstances that have been causing it. The astrologer again metaphorically turns the reader's attention towards their present actions that are to bring impressive results in the future. The promise in the future is huge, but what matters is what you are doing now. Therefore, the response must be immediate. Additionally, such general statements which allow for interpretative adaptations and which convince that the present determines the future, cannot be denied since they announce an obvious truth. Sometimes past tenses are used to remind us of or to show by contrast the usually negatively viewed past and the potential of the present.

5.5.1.2 Imperative mood

Imperative mood is very characteristic for horoscopolical writing. It successfully supports the feature of immediateness and exceptionality, since it builds the impression of a message that requires an immediate response or the sense of the uniqueness of certain situations, conditions, circumstances or things. It allows natural creation of the sense of hurry or the expression of how exceptional something is. Consider some example horoscopes in which the imperative mood is used:

Sagittarius December 18 – You've gone in circles with your high hopes for your former, current or potential partner. Or even with that enemy or rival of yours. **Keep hoping and accept the biggest and best**, when it is hinted at. From June 2012 so much will become possible. And from September 2012 the stuck karma has gone. For now? **Use that oh-so-useful situation.** [H-76]

Sagittarius December 29 – The good news is, over the next four weeks, you will successfully tackle the financial, business or property question which has so far lingered, but never been resolved. It's a great time to stand back from yourself, and examine your behaviour as an outsider would. Did you do anything in 2011 which could be called over-controlling? **Fix it!** [H-176]

Aquarius January 4 – If someone (or something) is baffling you, then it's time to act. You have let situations like this slide under your nose before, over the years. It's like letting a gas leak through a gap in the window. There truly is something gassy about the person, group or just the situation. It's subtle. But if it builds up it can make you woozy. **Stop that leak!** [H-221] [H-233]

With the use of an imperative mood, all the three above examples encourage the *Cosmopolitan* woman to take an immediate action and respond to the ensuing situation.

Situations that the readers may encounter according to horoscopical forecasts are either pleasant or troublesome. The first are too exceptional to be left unnoticed and must be exploited as fast as possible, while the others might cause too much unnecessary trouble if left unresolved, and require adequate steps at once in order to prevent a disaster.

5.5.1.3 Time expressions

The use of different time expressions, such as *now*, *right now*, *soon*, *today*, *at the moment*, etc. is another linguistic indicator of the feature of immediateness and exceptionality. The frequency of occurrence of these words in the corpus is as follows: *now* – 288 occurrences, *right now* – 42 occurrences, *soon* – 19 occurrences, *today* – 88 occurrences, *tomorrow* – 17 occurrences, *at the moment* – 52 occurrences, *sooner or later* – 1 occurrence, *later* – 16 occurrences, *tonight* – 25 occurrences.

All such expressions direct attention and focus on the present moment and the happenings now or around now. By doing this, they also prompt an immediate response.

5.5.1.4 Sequences of synonymous words

Yet another linguistic indicator of the feature of immediateness and exceptionality is the use of sequences of synonymous words. These might fall into different categories – nouns, adjectives or verbs. The sequences of words that carry similar meaning or evoke similar associations allow the repetition of the same idea twice or three times and, therefore, enhance the perception of them as more significant, unique, exceptional. Please consider some examples in which sequences of synonymous words are used:

Aries December 27 – Scientists and multimedia boffins are not solely devoted to your **relaunch, renaissance or rebirth** at the moment. Oh no, they've got far better things to do – haven't they? But it's odd how you keep stumbling across the newest of the new, when thinking about how you want the world to see you and receive you. And all of it is potentially life-changing. [H-160]

Gemini December 13 – You thought you had something (or someone) in the bag, in terms of your partner, potential partner or former opposite number. Maybe you even thought you had life nailed in terms of your **rival, opponent or enemy**. Well, so much for that. But from now until January, you can either go back to the drawing board, or ditch Plan A in favour of Plan B. [H-34]

Sagittarius December 23 – People who are quite **radical, unusual or even highly eccentric** are teaching you something useful, true and good. Little by little, your old ideas about children, motherhood, contraception or sex are being taken in new directions. It's called your Uranus Fifth House Cycle and it's here to stay. Be open and stay open. What are you discovering? [H-122]

Pisces December 19 – You are having an epic financial, property and business cycle so no wonder it all feels like learning to drive. Or learning to fly (let's be optimistic). From the end of 2012 the hard bits are over. But there's always an unbelievably **practical, useful** new lesson to learn. And so it is now. Just do what's required and remember, experts are always on hand. [H-86]

Pisces December 20 – The money, the possessions, the business interests, the house or the apartment **surprises you, excites you and re-energises you**. This was the last thing you expected at this particular time, but it could be so remarkable next year, if you take it further. And then there's your way with words, images or ideas. That massive potential is still waiting. [H-98]

The first two examples above include nouns of synonymous meaning, the following two, adjectives. The last is an example with verbs which, admittedly, differ in meaning, but the associations (and the feelings those associations entail) that they all immediately evoke are extremely close. They all create the sense of positive flow of energy, a pleasant increase of adrenaline and excitement.

5.5.1.5 Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives

The use of comparative and superlative forms of adjectives is also intended to evoke positive associations and the sense of excitement. Please see the example horoscopes which include comparative and superlative forms of adjectives (in bold):

Capricorn December 18 – Your lifestyle could be **so much bigger and better** next year. Oh, the potential is there, and you can see how things might be in terms of your work, your wellbeing or your life at university. Why does nothing ever really change, though? It will, from June 2012, with tons more free space from September. For now, create the future. Use a situation! [H-75]

Sagittarius December 18 – You've gone in circles with your high hopes for your former, current or potential partner. Or even with that enemy or rival of yours. Keep hoping and accept **the biggest and best**, when it is hinted at. From June 2012 so much will become possible. And from September 2012 the stuck karma has gone. For now? Use that oh-so-useful situation. [H-76]

Aquarius December 19 – Every 29 years the 'teacher' planet Saturn moves through your house of university life, publishing, travel, college, other cultures and other nationalities. No wonder you've learned so much in the last 18 months. It's never

particularly easy. And maybe you could have done this **faster, or more efficiently**. Still, another useful lesson is waiting. [H-85]

Libra December 20 – Thrilling and life-changing developments involving your former, current or potential partner are here. Or your enemy, rival or opponent. You never banked on this, at least not with these particular details or timing. But suddenly 2012 looks **way more interesting**, for **the most unusual reasons**! That cash, property or business potential is still hovering. [H-102]

With the use of comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, a certain promise is created, the horoscopolical promise of a better or a best.

5.5.1.6 Summary

In conclusion, the feature of immediateness and exceptionality seems inherently horoscopolical. It is frequently exploited throughout the corpus and its linguistic indicators successfully fulfil their persuasive purpose.

It is important for the beauty myth to create the sense of exceptionality and to elicit immediate reactions to what it offers, since the existence of the beauty myth relies to a great extent on its constant confirmation in social practices and its validation in discourse. When the exceptionality and the uniqueness of things, situations or phenomena are taken for granted, people are likely to respond to them quicker than they normally would, and without any deeper consideration of factual assets and possible drawbacks of the compromise on offer.

The general *Cosmopolitan* ideology is a promise of something exceptional, something that cannot be resisted, and something to which a potential *Cosmopolitan* woman should want to respond immediately.

5.5.2 Feature of patternisation and logoisation

The feature of patternisation and logoisation generally refers to restriction of the development of concepts and to drilling patterns of action-reaction associations, as well as to the activation of designed, automatic associations and responses. To achieve this, linguistic phrases and expressions are supposed to function as magical spells or a sort of ritual formula. Such linguistic treatments allow the inclusion of a great deal of information in the relatively condensed form of a horoscope. Discourse that is shaped in such a way is resistant to refusal and, consequently, meets its persuasive purpose.

In the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, there are some patterns observable. The linguistic indicators that reveal the feature of patternisation and logoisation include relatively fixed phrases and word connections specific for the genre, whose purpose is to express the intended message in the most condensed form possible that sounds convincing enough to reduce resistance and increase persuasiveness.

5.5.2.1 Passive voice

A number of patterns used in the corpus are typically horoscopical. The passive construction in different tenses *you are/are being/have been/were/will be + past participle* is extremely frequent in the corpus, but since it is a linguistic manifestation of the feature of technicisation and professionalisation in the first place, then the detailed analysis of specific examples can be found further in the dissertation in the subchapter dedicated to this specific feature. Here, it should be mentioned that this grammatical structure allows attention and specific concern to turn towards the reader – with the pronoun *you* at the very beginning of the statement to support the sense of affinity, and simultaneously move away the concept of self-agency to support the idea of astrological powers which is communicated by horoscopes.

5.5.2.2 Personification

It is extremely frequent in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes that particular personified stars, planets or asteroids frequently dictate the future, tell us what to do or not to do, caution, advise, suggest, persuade, recommend or else assist the reader's steps, as in the following examples (in bold):

Cancer February 1 – **Venus in Pisces tells you that** this is a two-way street, in terms of the trip, move, book, website or course. Or the person from another culture. **Neptune in Pisces from Friday tells you that** all known boundaries will dissolve. Are you ready for that? Computer, phone, talking or listening issues hover. They'll hit resolution after April so pace yourself. [H-405]

Leo February 2 – It's all about your friend or the group. **Ops and Proserpina tell you that** someone will act as a human bridge between two very powerful people or networks of individuals. And also that despite fairly tough conditions there is a brilliant, blazing promise of something better. This has been a karmic trip for you. But the karmic revolving door also shuts later on. [H-416]

Pisces February 13 – **The asteroid Diana is showing you** how thrilling freedom can be, in the context of travelling, moving, studying, writing, publishing or teaching. You will lose guarantees or security but gain sweet independence. Yes or no?

There's another horoscope story today too. It kicks off this evening, and it will help you take stock of work, university life or a volunteer role. Is your best coping mechanism still right for you? [H-516]

Virgo March 16 – **Pluto is sending you three big messages this week.** This is the last one. Basically, unless you become slightly more passionate and focussed, nothing will change. It's okay to be a control freak if it just means controlling your own life. [H-887]

Leo January 27 – Your house, family, flat or share household situation becomes vastly easier from today, as the epic battle between two totally incompatible people (or two situations which met head-on) is virtually over. **The asteroid Diana is now assisting you,** and that means action and initiative. Total freedom from any ties that trap you. Tons more room to move. [H-380]

Gemini January 29 – Emotions can be left out of it, and actually that's the best thing. This is a question about the money, the house, the possessions, the business or the flat. **The powerful asteroid Hygeia, who helps you prevent problems before they happen, and solidly protect you, is on your side.** She's in the totally practical sign of Capricorn. So just be practical. Finis! [H-394]

Personification of different celestial bodies is connected with the specificity of horoscopes as a genre. The linguistic treatment in which personified stars, planets or asteroids tell the readers what (not) to do is very frequent in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, and this is why it may be considered in terms of a specific horoscopolical pattern.

5.5.2.3 Polyword phrases

Another linguistic indicator of the feature of patternisation and logoisation in the corpus is polyword phrases that reoccur in different variants. Most of them have already been listed in previous subchapters concerning the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. It is, therefore, of no use to repeat the phrases at this point, unlike mentioning how the feature of patternisation and logoisation is realised by them. It turns out that the polyword phrases not only repeat themselves in the corpus of horoscopes in their unchanged form, which already allows classification of them as a pattern, but they also (even if in variously modified versions) allow repetition of the same concepts over and over again. Moreover, such phrases usually include a particular combination of abstract ideas, general enough to carry a great deal of meaning or associations in the most concise form possible. And this is what such linguistic patterns are meant for.

5.5.2.4 Ellipsis

The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes also make use of ellipsis. Sentences in which parts are omitted without any damage to the meaning are again extremely frequent. This linguistic tool matches the relatively informal style of the genre as well as supports successfully the feature of patternisation and logoisation, hiding a great deal of meaning within only a few words. For example:

Libra December 16 – The planet Neptune has been drifting through your house of sex and intimacy for years. This is where the occasional contraception or pregnancy question comes up for you, or even where you think about dating people with children. Then there are kids in the family circle, or kids in your working or voluntary life. **Today's message?** Make some rules! [H-54]

In the above horoscope, where shown in bold, some elements have been erased – the whole question would be as follows: *What is the today's message?* Instead, the same meaning is included in a much shorter form thanks to ellipsis. In the horoscope, it is enough to ask *Today's message?* to express exactly the same meaning. Instances of this linguistic treatment are multiple. Ellipsis is the more eagerly used since horoscopes as a genre are meant to have a concise form themselves.

5.5.2.5 Summary

The linguistic patterns used in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are primarily intended to increase the persuasiveness of a given message.

The beauty myth to a great extent relies on the immediate activation of automatic associations and responses. The patternised expressions not only allow to carry more meaning in a concise form, but they also drill patterns of action-reaction associations.

5.5.3 Feature of accelerated pulse

The feature of accelerated pulse mostly manifests itself through expressions that are meant to increase the expressiveness of a particular text. Such linguistic treatments are introduced in order to evoke particular feelings, emotions and responses among the audience. The persuasiveness of a given text increases thanks to the atmosphere of excitement, optimistic visions, positive attitude and the sense of happiness that is created. Such an impression can be achieved due to expressions that evoke positive associations, vivid metaphorical language and

energising vocabulary. In short, the feature refers to increasing the attractiveness of the language used in a given text by making it as dynamic as possible.

The linguistic indicators of the feature of accelerated pulse have the task of introducing and intensifying an atmosphere of uniqueness and a feeling of intense excitement. To help to achieve this, many linguistic tools are exploited. In the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the following can be observed: superlative forms of adjectives, the word *super* or *extra* used as a prefix, an adjective or an adverb, emotional punctuation including exclamation marks, question marks and suspension points, quantifiers and metaphorical language whose purpose is to create an impression of vivid forces of nature, war, explosion and the like.

5.5.3.1 Superlative forms of adjectives

Superlative forms of adjectives are used in order to make the content sound more vivid. Those that appear in the horoscopolical corpus include the following:

adjective	number of occurrences	adjective	number of occurrences	adjective	number of occurrences
<i>best</i>	41	<i>closest</i>	1	<i>most beneficial</i>	1
<i>biggest</i>	16	<i>earliest</i>	1	<i>most practical</i>	1
<i>most exciting</i>	4	<i>newest</i>	1	<i>most comfortable</i>	1
<i>greatest</i>	3	<i>dreamiest</i>	1	<i>most distant</i>	1
<i>latest</i>	3	<i>liveliest</i>	1	<i>most foreign</i>	1
<i>most personal</i>	3	<i>starkest</i>	1	<i>most demanding</i>	1
<i>deepest</i>	2	<i>savviest</i>	1	<i>most mysterious</i>	1
<i>murkiest</i>	2	<i>dearest</i>	1	<i>most extreme</i>	1
<i>toughest</i>	2	<i>finest</i>	1	<i>most challenging</i>	1
<i>most incredible</i>	2	<i>longest</i>	1	<i>most introspective</i>	1
<i>most confusing</i>	2	<i>most muddled</i>	1	<i>most evident</i>	1
<i>most unusual</i>	2	<i>most wonderful</i>	1	<i>most heartfelt</i>	1
<i>most subtle</i>	2	<i>most unexpected</i>	1	<i>most inventive</i>	1
<i>most muddling</i>	2	<i>most amazing</i>	1	<i>most spiritual</i>	1
<i>most baffling</i>	2	<i>most psychic</i>	1	<i>most emotional</i>	1
<i>most fascinating</i>	2	<i>most mixed-up</i>	1	<i>most thoughtful</i>	1
<i>strangest</i>	1	<i>most sociable</i>	1	<i>most fertile</i>	1

Table 5 *Superlative forms of adjectives in the corpus of Cosmopolitan horoscopes*

It should be mentioned, however, that it occurs that two or more adjectives are listed together in word combinations such as: *the most exciting and hopeful*, *the most exciting and unexpected*, *the most unexpected and thrilling*, or *your most thoughtful, ingenious and creative*, which allows the inclusion of even more adjectives in the above list – adjectives that might be considered to have appeared in their superlative form, with part of the superlative form omitted as an instance of an elliptical construction. These are the following: *hopeful* (1 occurrence), one more occurrence for *unexpected*, *thrilling* (1 occurrence), *ingenious* (1 occurrence) and *creative* (1 occurrence). Such accumulation of adjectives, by the way, actually enhances the effect of accelerated pulse.

5.5.3.2 *Super and extra*

Another linguistic tool at the service of the feature of accelerated pulse is the use of words such as *super* or *extra*. The first one appears five times in the following settings written in bold:

Pisces December 17 – Sometimes other people hold up a mirror, so even though the behaviour of one particular acquaintance, friend or collection of people has been **super-controlling**, you will gain from examining your own approach with a microscope. If you were outside the situation, and not yourself, how would you see yourself? Is there anything that could be improved? [H-62]

Taurus December 19 – Until the end of 2012, the ‘teacher’ planet Saturn will be in your house of work, university life and lifestyle (your wellbeing). The lesson at the moment is pretty obvious. You are more than halfway through this cycle, though, and you’ve already educated yourself quite remarkably, if you look back. Still, you need to be **super practical** about all this. [H-95]

Virgo January 14 – Whatever is swirling around in the ether at the moment could lead to **super success** for you. It’s very early days, but you are around people, places or possibilities with promise. From June this year, the most beneficial career or university cycle for 12 years kicks off. Nothing comes from nothing, though, so plant those seeds now, and water them too. [H-319]

Capricorn February 18 – Once you learn, you know. And when you know, you grow. Does that all sound a bit too L.A. for a Saturday morning? It’s true, though. Because at around 4pm, Saturn will remind you that your career, university life or non-profit commitments are here to educate you. It’s all a weird part of your growth. In fact, you wouldn’t evolve like this (into a kind of wise **superwoman**) without this nine-month journey ahead. [H-572]

Taurus March 4 – You have to live in the real world where your job, volunteer role, university life (or health) is concerned. How easy this is to cope with, depends on the way you’ve chosen to handle it. If you weren’t **super-aware** of this yet, you will be today. And then you can adjust things. [H-747]

Used either as a prefix, an adverb or an adjective, the word *super* allows the meaning to be expressed of exceeding certain norms or limits or of having the property of an extreme or excessive degree.

The word *extra*, on the other hand, is used three times in the corpus in the following horoscopes:

Pisces January 20 – What you have been doing behind closed doors, perhaps even without full consciousness, will now be revealed to you, as it really is. This is an annual event, of course, thanks to the Sun's cycle. But this time it has **extra importance**. You will soon be going into a clearer, sharper, more focussed, more upfront, more open era of your life. At last! [H-350]

Leo February 21 – You have found a way to make **extra money** if you are typical of your sign, but there is an element of fuzzy thinking or mild confusion about the way it's all going to work. Sometimes it helps to crack your own whip. Because this really does have potential if it's managed. [H-613]

Leo February 27 – Take **extra precautions** with finance, business or property between now and April 4th as what appears to be going forwards could actually go backwards. There may be issues with communication, computers, banks or the post with changes or delays. Protect yourself. [H-685]

The word *extra* appears as an adjective carrying the meaning of additional, beyond or more than usual, necessary or normally expected.

5.5.3.3 Emotional punctuation and multiplication of letters

The feature of accelerated pulse also manifests itself through the use of emotional punctuation or multiplying letters. There are 271 exclamation marks in the corpus, 351 question marks and 43 instances of suspension points. Sometimes the writer multiplies letters, such as in the following horoscope:

Taurus March 15 – The children in your world (or sex questions which won't disappear) seem to be creating tension. As in (strangled voice) **tenssshion**. It stops in about a month, when you sort things out at last. For now, just plan. And plot. [H-879]

There are also interjections that are supposed to create the atmosphere of surprise, wonder, enthusiasm, suspense, astonishment or excitement in the horoscopes, such as for example: *wow* – 10 occurrences, *whoosh* – 1 occurrence, *aaaa(a)h* – 4 occurrences, *aaargh* – 1 occurrence, *aha* – 1 occurrence, *o(o)h* – 17 occurrences.

5.5.3.4 Generalised quantifiers

Generalised quantifiers are yet another linguistic tool that increases the level of persuasiveness of a horoscological message. Though the reader may realise that there are exceptions, they perceive the horoscological overgeneralisation as a certain contractual truth and do not discredit it as nonsense. Please consider the examples below:

Aquarius January 8 – Any remaining confusion about your appearance or public profile will vanish in just under four weeks. It has been going on for so many years that you have learned to live with the situation. For now, though, have the satisfaction of taking control and organising this part of your life. There is **nothing and nobody** which is too much for you! [H-257]

The above horoscope tries to convince that there are no limits. The next one claims that something is always true about Piscean women:

Pisces February 22 – You could experiment and explore, using your name, photo, video or face as the basic material. That would be an escape from reality and Piscean women are **always** looking for one! Where will it actually lead, though? Not a bad time to peer into the future a little bit. [H-619]

Yet another horoscope claims that a certain feature is common for all people:

Aquarius February 26 – Today and tomorrow are great for house or flat hunting, decorating, attending to DIY repairs or fantasising about a home exchange or holiday residence. This also applies to family relationship-building and flatmates. **Everyone** needs a place, or people, to belong to. [H-666]

The messages themselves do not seem to allow for any exceptions. Although these are obvious overgeneralisations, they are not likely to be questioned by the reader, but rather accepted as natural, logical and reasonable. Persuasive exaggeration is frequent in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes and does not seem to provoke any serious doubts.

5.5.3.5 Metaphorical language

Metaphorical language is one of the ways of creating the impression of uniqueness and excitement, or adding vividness to the horoscological message. Metaphors constitute one of the most effective persuasive devices. This is why they are eagerly explored in horoscopes. Here are but a few examples:

Aries February 9 – Turn to your best supporters involved with the written or spoken word, to break through. Geminis may be on the list. Anyone who is a devoted internet user, natural writer or speaker will qualify, though! **You seem to have hit a**

brick wall or a full stop. Focus on the idea of communication as the way to unblock the situation. You'll also find out exactly who is the right person to stick with, and who, perhaps is not. [H-490]

The above horoscope actually makes use of two idiomatic expressions: *to hit a brick wall* to mean not to be able to continue something or make progress due to a hindrance or an obstacle, and *to come to a full stop*, which basically means to end something, especially because of some problems.

The next example makes use of a comparison to vivid forces of nature:

Taurus February 22 – Of course you want to feel the flow with friends – or a group. It's an escape. As **this area of your life is prone to flooding and tsunamis**, though (not now, but in the future) do check on what you are letting into your life. This is all very new, too. Since February 3rd or 4th. [H-628]

The following text yet again uses an idiom – *be in the same boat* – to express that the woman is in the same unpleasant situation as other people:

Pisces December 29 – **Everyone is in the same boat** at the moment. There have been real issues about power plays and over-controlling behaviour in 2011 and now it's all being examined and exposed. You too! It will be a far better year ahead, in terms of your social life or group commitments, once everything is sorted out. So this is the first step. Look and keep looking. [H-174]

In the example below, on the other hand, the writer uses the metaphor of popping bubbles to express the meaning of destroying or disproving one's fantasies, hopes, delusions, misbeliefs or false convictions.

Cancer January 11 – **A few bubbles are popping**, in terms of the money, the house, the possessions, the business or the flat. And **nobody likes seeing rainbow bubbles pop**, even if by February you'll realise just how empty they were! For the moment, though, there is a definite maybe about the future. You'll have to wait, though, to find out if this/he/she/they is truly real. [H-301]

Metaphors like these stimulate imagination and certainly allow for multiple interpretations, or rather adaptations to individual readers' lives. Their persuasiveness is based on their conventionality, which is rarely questioned seriously.

5.5.3.6 Summary

It can be assumed that if the expressiveness of a *Cosmopolitan* horoscope is increased, the level of persuasiveness of its message is enhanced as a consequence. And it is certainly true to say that *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes show the feature of accelerated pulse through the use of various linguistic means described above. The enhancement of attractiveness of a message is the key to make it even more convincing or persuasive.

5.5.4 Feature of affinity

What characterises *the feature of affinity* is the illusion of familiarity and closeness that is created in texts. It refers to linguistic treatments that suggest a real contact with the audience and an entrance into the personal space of the reader. The sense of affinity is built upon an illusive conviction that a particular message addresses precisely *you*, personally. Such a conviction guarantees eventual effectiveness of the message. One of the most persuasive ways of achieving the sense of affinity between interlocutors is the use of the second person singular. It evokes an illusory feeling that the relationship between who sends and who receives the message is close and natural. As a consequence, the level of persuasiveness increases as a consequence.

The linguistic manifestations of the feature of affinity include the use of second person singular, imperative mood, the words *personal* or *personally* in the corpus.

5.5.4.1 The pronoun *you*

Even though the pronoun *you* is commonly used in the English language, still it serves the feature of affinity by reducing the distance between the sender of the message and the audience and increases the feeling of familiarity. Thanks to the above linguistic treatments, the horoscopolical message sounds as if it was sent by a person who knows the reader well. The relationship seems close, not to say intimate – after all, the astrologer happens to know personal secrets. Questions and exclamations evoke an impression of a conversation. Also, it is quite rare to be addressed as *you* in writing.

The pronoun *you* has the frequency of 2155 occurrences in the corpus and appears at least once in the considerable majority of the horoscopes in question. *Your*, on the other hand, appears 1245 times. Both words are located at the top of the word frequency list, with *you* at the second and *your* at the seventh position. This fact does not surprise, however, since using the second person in horoscopes is characteristic for the specificity of the genre.

5.5.4.2 Imperative mood

Use of the imperative mood also reduces the distance. It is normally used to express a variety of meanings, such as demands, requests, commands, orders, giving either prohibition or permission, exhortation, instruction or advice. In horoscopes, which are typically stylised to serve as practical guidance and counselling, the latter uses are common. With the assistance of imperative mood, *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes provide instructions and practical advice. The readers must not be given the feeling of being forced to anything. Making them confident of self-agency and actually being in control gives better persuasive results. This is why horoscopes mostly warn, encourage, give advice or practical instructions through the use of imperative mood. The distance becomes shorter because an impression of intimacy and friendly concern is created. Please consider some example horoscopes:

Libra March 16 – **Look back** at the way you used to handle the family, share household or live-in partnership, in your world. **Go back** four or five years and ask yourself why things have altered. This is one of those rare weeks when an answer is clear. [H-886]

The horoscope quoted above has the form of advice rather than an order. The following two are similar:

Pisces March 15 – You and your friend could make a huge difference if you take your biggest strengths and remember how powerful you are together. When it comes to love, though, less is more. **Try** to chillax over an issue which could flare up. [H-870]

Sagittarius March 11 – Everything is in a state of flux with the house, family, flat or flatmate. There are no clear rules or boundaries any more, but today should help you (or others) decide where a line can be crossed. Or perhaps, not. Are there children around you? **Don't let** a male dominate. [H-824]

As can be observed, the horoscopes do not try to enforce anything through the use of imperative mood, but only provide guidance, suggest solutions and assist the readers in making decisions and taking action. This contributes to shaping the impression of affinity between the readers and the astrologer whom they see both as a specialist and as a person close to them, a friend.

5.5.4.3 The word *personal*

Whenever the astrologer mentions something personal, the impression of familiarity and intimacy is immediately evoked, as if personal issues and secrets were entrusted to the

astrologer who wants good for the readers. The word *personal* appears 25 times in the corpus, *personally* has 3 occurrences. Apart from the personal, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes also mention emotion, heart and soul issues.

5.5.4.4 Summary

The feature of affinity plays an important role in the discourse of the beauty myth. The illusion of familiarity, closeness and friendliness, which is achieved thanks to the above-mentioned linguistic means, contributes to the increase of persuasiveness. It seems crucial for the beauty myth to appear natural and friendly. Only then is it acquired with no serious resistance. Things, people, places or phenomena which we encounter every day, and with which we are familiar, are less likely to raise suspicion.

5.5.5 Feature of technicisation and professionalisation

The feature of technicisation and professionalisation refers to saturating the message with specific terminology and linguistic structures in order to conform a particular discourse to logical, trustworthy and credible deduction. The message must seem and sound scientific enough to prove correct. The terminology and structures used are meant to evoke positive connotations and, above all, trust in the authority of the sender and the genuineness of the message itself. Once this is achieved, the persuasiveness of a given text or discourse becomes greater.

The texts of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are obviously not formal or scientific pieces of writing. However, the feature of technicisation and professionalisation is manifested in them. The specific horoscopical register includes vocabulary that is meant to prove the astrological reliability of the messages and their validity as (pseudo-)scientific texts. Other linguistic indicators are the use of passive voice, conditional sentences or the cause-and-effect construction of the content (e.g. indicating results, consequences, outcomes). Thanks to these linguistic tools, the texts that are supposed to be light-hearted, entertaining and informal in style gain the generic seriousness and formality. The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are perfect examples of the well-balanced composition of convincing reasonability and interpretative freedom elements. All to serve persuasiveness.

5.5.5.1 (Pseudo-)scientific vocabulary

Cosmopolitan horoscopes are composed of typically horoscopolical register that includes the names of the signs of the Zodiac (*Pisces* – 107 occurrences together with those in headlines immediately preceding the horoscopolical message and 23 in the horoscopolical texts only; *Aquarius* – 97 occurrences altogether and 13 in the texts alone; *Capricorn* – 97 occurrences altogether and 13 in the horoscopolical messages; *Sagittarius* – 85 occurrences in all and 2 in the very horoscopes; *Scorpio* – 96 occurrences altogether and 13 in the horoscope texts, including one plural form; *Libra* – 92 occurrences together with headlines and 7 in the main texts; *Virgo* – 93 occurrences altogether and 8 in the very texts; *Leo* – 91 occurrences including headlines and 6 in the horoscopes alone; *Cancer* – 85 occurrences altogether and 2 in the horoscopes; *Gemini* – 93 occurrences altogether and 9 in the horoscopes, including one plural form; *Taurus* – 89 occurrences altogether and 11 in the horoscopes alone; *Aries* – 87 occurrences altogether and 9 in the horoscopolical texts alone). It is necessary to mention that the names mostly refer to Zodiac signs, but they are also used to refer to a person or people unified under particular signs – the names are pluralised (e.g. *Geminis*) or appear in word combinations such as *Pisces women*. Other forms that are also present in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are: *Sagittarians* – 2 occurrences, *Libran* – 1 occurrence, *Librans* – 2 occurrences, *Cancerian* – 4 occurrences, *Cancerians* – 2 occurrences, *Taurean* – 1 occurrence, *Taureans* – 2 occurrences, *Aquarian* – 1 occurrence, *Aquarians* – 4 occurrences.

Another group of words includes the names of planets. These are presented in *Table 6* below:

word	number of occurrence	Word	number of occurrence	word	number of occurrence
<i>Mercury</i>	21	<i>Mars</i>	6	<i>Uranus</i>	9
<i>Venus</i>	7	<i>Jupiter</i>	15	<i>Neptune</i>	34
<i>Earth</i>	none with reference to the planet	<i>Saturn</i>	17	<i>Pluto</i>	13

Table 6 Occurrences of names of planets

There is also one occurrence of the word *Mercurial*. The word *planet*, on the other hand, appears 58 times in the horoscopes.

The horoscopolical register also includes names of asteroids. Please consider *Table 7* below:

word	number of occurrences	word	number of occurrences	word	number of occurrences
<i>Diana</i>	11	<i>Ops</i>	6	<i>Bacchus</i>	1
<i>Juno</i>	10	<i>Proserpina</i>	5	<i>Aesculapia</i>	1
<i>Hygeia</i>	8	<i>Fortuna</i>	3	<i>Panacea</i>	1
<i>Chiron</i>	7	<i>Minerva</i>	2		

Table 7 Occurrences of names of asteroids

Moreover, the very word *asteroid(s)* appears 29 times in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

Other pseudo-scientific vocabulary explored in the corpus might include the following: *celestial bodies* – 1 occurrence, *heavenly body(-ies)* – 6 occurrences, *house* with reference to the houses of horoscope – 49 occurrences, *(the) Moon* – 62 occurrences, including *(the) Full Moon* – 18 occurrences, *(the) New Moon* – 9 occurrences, *the Moon's Node* – 4, *the Moon's South Node* – 1 occurrence, *the Sun* – 9 occurrences, *your Sun* – 1 occurrence, *the Sun's cycle* – 1 occurrence.

5.5.5.2 Passive voice

Passive voice is considered one of the indicators of formal style. Therefore, in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, this linguistic structure can also be claimed to serve the feature of technicisation and professionalisation. Simultaneously, the passive construction allows the directing of attention towards the action and distances the performer of it, which again widens the scope of interpretation. It may well contribute to the creation of a specific horoscopolical atmosphere of magic, a kind of self-agency of things. Additionally, which is often the case, the focus is on how *you* were, are, are being, or have been affected, or the immediate surroundings. Please consider some examples:

Aquarius December 12 – The career, university or voluntary situation you thought was fixed, has now come unstuck. But it could stick again. Oh, heaven forfend! Just allow the process to work itself out, because after Tuesday, you'll know. Until then trust in the knowledge that you **are being given** some Plan A and Plan B ideas, and even Plan C. And it's all so useful.
[H-13]

Scorpio December 30 – You **are being tested** at the moment, but in a useful way. The Universe is showing you a familiar scenario. The vague possibility of a not-quite-real, but fascinating new story, in connection with how you live, or where you live. Or maybe with the family. Fortunately you've learned too much from prior mistakes to just walk into this. Give it time!
[H-189]

Taurus January 13 – You **have been shown** very clear signs about the right place, person or plan – one which would finally put you in control of your life as a student, writer, publisher or teacher. Or just as a woman of the world, dealing with other cultures or nationalities. How can you resist? Of course it's going to mean changing everything. But surely this is better! [H-314]

The passive constructions that turn attention towards what happens to *you* are frequent and appear in the texts in their Present Simple, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, Past Simple, and Future Simple variants. The Present Simple examples – *you are* + *past participle* – found in the corpus are the following: *you are ('re) left with* – 5 occurrences, *you are seen* – 4 occurrences, *you are mesmerised* – 1 occurrence, *you are ruled by* – 1 occurrence, *you are allowed to* – 2 occurrences, *you are ('re) prepared* – 2 occurrence, *you are involved in* – 2 occurrences, *you are reminded of* – 1 occurrence, *you are quite naturally seduced* – 1 occurrence, *you're just so focused on* – 1 occurrence, *you're viewed* – 1 occurrence, *you're surrounded by* – 1 occurrence .

The Present Continuous construction of the passive – *you are being* + *past participle* appears in the following combinations: *you are ('re) being shown* – 15 occurrences, *you are being given* – 1 occurrence, *you are ('re) being offered* – 4 occurrences, *you are being tested* – 2 occurrences, *you're being told* – 1 occurrence, *you are being pushed* – 1 occurrence, plus 4 occurrences for *you are now being* + *past participle* (*kept/shown/taken*), and 2 occurrences for *you are actually being* + *past participle* (*helped/shown*).

The Present Perfect examples of the similar passive construction (*you have been* + *past participle*) include the following: *you have been surrounded* – 1 occurrence, *you have ('ve) been shown* – 9 occurrences, *you have been given* – 1 occurrence, *you have been safely deposited* – 1 occurrence, *you've been stuck in* – 2 occurrences, *you've been put* – 1 occurrence, *you've been invited* – 1 occurrence, *you've been asked* – 1 occurrence.

The Past Simple constructions of the kind (*you were* + *past participle*) appear in the corpus but are relatively rare, which should not surprise since in any case horoscopes hardly ever make any references to the past and only deal with what is happening now and what the future will bring. These found in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes are as follows: *you were shown* – 2 occurrences, *you were given* – 1 occurrence, *you were hooked* – 1 occurrence, *you were even fascinated by* – 1 occurrence, *you were held up* – 1 occurrence, *you were taken over by* – 2 occurrences, *you were born* – 3, *you were moved* – 1 occurrence, *you were made for* – 1 occurrence.

Finally, the Future Simple passive construction of the kind (*you will be + past participle*) that appear in the corpus includes the following: *you will be connected to* – 1 occurrence, *you'll be shown* – 1 occurrence and *you'll be brought* – 1 occurrence.

Obviously, the instances presented of the passive represent only one pattern that seems typically horoscopical and is explored considerably, but there are other multiple uses of the passive in the corpus as well. Taking into consideration the above examples, however, the statement can be risked that the passive constructions of the type (*you are/are being/have been/were/will be + past participle*) are simultaneously a linguistic manifestation of the feature of patternisation and logoisation.

5.5.5.3 Conditional sentences

Conditional sentences are also characteristic of horoscopical style and appear fairly frequently in the corpus. Those that appear in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes include the zero, first and second type of conditional. The second type is relatively rare. The third type has not been found.

As the zero conditional is used to describe situations which have habitual or automatic results, or else to give instructions, its frequent occurrence in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes is completely legitimate. And so is the use of the first conditional and the second conditional sentences. The first conditional allows to talk about a future situation that is possible to take place, but it may well help to express permission, ability, command, request or advice. The second conditional, on the other hand, lets the writer give advice or talk about a future situation which is unlikely to happen. All this agrees with the specificity of the horoscope as a genre which mostly concerns the present and the future, and does not normally refer to the past. This is probably the reason why the third conditional is rarely explored or is not explored at all in horoscopical texts – it is because it refers to a past condition that cannot be fulfilled.

Here are selected examples of the horoscopes with conditional sentences:

Cancer December 16 – **If you want to avoid the kind of baffling (and slightly wobbly) situation that followed you around with money, houses, business interests, possessions or flats over the last few years, be really careful with the new mood around you.** Something or someone has drifted into your world, and you want to float along with it. But what is really sensible here? [H-57]

The above horoscope resembles advice. The horoscope below, on the other hand, encourages to imagine a certain situation in order to find an appropriate solution. It expresses this meaning with the use of the second conditional.

Pisces December 17 – Sometimes other people hold up a mirror, so even though the behaviour of one particular acquaintance, friend or collection of people has been super-controlling, you will gain from examining your own approach with a microscope. **If you were outside the situation, and not yourself, how would you see yourself?** Is there anything that could be improved? [H-62]

Yet another example concerns natural and inescapable consequences of particular actions. It uses the zero conditional to express this.

Scorpio December 26 – Some questions about your public profile, online reputation, face, body or general me-ness are surfacing right now. **If you accept a particular situation now on offer, you exchange independence for promises. If you decide against it, then you have spontaneity back in your life, and self-mastery** – but you really will be on your own. [H-143]

The conditional patterns that have been observed in the corpus are listed below together with examples selected from the horoscope texts:

the zero conditional:

if + present simple, present simple

e.g. *If you accept a particular situation now on offer, you exchange independence for promises.* [H-143]

if + present continuous, present simple

e.g. *If you're wondering why two people (or organisations) are delivering absolutely nothing on time (or just nothing at all) there's an astro-explanation for it!* [H-1000]

if + present simple, imperative (general instruction)

e.g. *If paperwork that is significant for your career, volunteer role or university life has to be signed or accepted, read the fine print.* [H-962]

if + present simple, present perfect

e.g. *You have found a way to make extra money if you are typical of your sign, (...).* [H-613]

the first conditional:

if + present simple, will

e.g. *The world will move on with you, if you hold back.* [H-919]

if + present simple, imperative

e.g. *If you are in the company of friends or particular networks this evening, take a closer look at what is being revealed.* [H-592]

if + present continuous, imperative

e.g. *If you're buying new gear, check the terms and conditions.* [H-955]

if + present simple, going to

e.g. *You are going to lose your old security blanket if you go along with this big push for change.* [H-919]

if + present simple, modal verb

e.g. *If you buy a computer, phone (or connect to a new ISP) before April 16 there may be technical problems or mistakes.* [H-714]

if + present continuous, modal verb

e.g. *If you're dating someone new, he (or you) may be changeable.* [H-684]

if + going to, will

e.g. *If that's going to shift, it will take a few more weeks.* [H-894]

if + modal verb, modal verb

e.g. *If you can wait a couple of weeks, the conversation you need to have about a friend or group can take place properly.* [H-963]

the second conditional:

if + past simple, would

e.g. *If you were outside the situation, and not yourself, how would you see yourself?* [H-62]

Other constructions that express condition are also used in the corpus. Here are some selected examples with *unless* as an alternative to *if* as well as instances of imaginary conditions with *What if*:

unless + present simple, present simple

e.g. *Libran women never go into battle unless there's a big issue about fairness or justice at stake.* [H-898]

unless + present simple, *will*

e.g. *Unless you accept the cosmic challenge, though, you'll never see the rewards.* [H-172]

unless + present simple, modal verb

e.g. (...) *unless you talk to a Leo (they had it for 14 years) you may feel very wide-eyed about what is taking place.* [H-588]

unless + present simple, imperative

e.g. (...) *don't give it any oxygen unless you want a forest fire of emotion after April 14th.* [H-729]

unless + present continuous, imperative

e.g. *But unless you're sorting out confusion (with a view to ending it by February) don't enter into anything new and fuzzy.* [H-372]

unless + past continuous, *would*

e.g. (...) *you wouldn't be a human bean (like a baked bean, but with a dress on) unless you weren't avoiding something.* [H-812]

imaginary condition with *what if*

e.g. *What if you want to avoid motherhood?* [H-806]

e.g. *What if I told you that your hopes were correct?* [H-347]

As it can be observed, conditional constructions are very frequent in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, and they appear in different variants. They seem to be very typical for the genre and for the language of success. Perhaps this is because they serve the persuasive function well.

5.5.5.4 Cause-effect construction

Another linguistic tool that may well serve the feature of technicisation and professionalization is the cause-effect construction of the horoscopes in question, because it increases the impression of logic and reasonability of the content. This is done whenever a

horoscope mentions *causes* (*cause* as a noun – 1 occurrence, as a verb – two occurrences, including one past form) and *reasons* (22 occurrences, including 12 in singular), or *consequences* (3 occurrences), *results* (12 occurrences, including 6 in singular form, plus one use as a verb) and *outcomes* (5 occurrences, including 3 in singular form). It can also be achieved with the already mentioned conditional sentences. To prove with example, consider the following:

Virgo March 9 – You’ve taken various steps to deal with a money, house, business or flat question. Now you are being shown **the emotional consequences of those steps**. Is your early 2012 plan still working for you? This is the right time to look in the mirror and ask that question. [H-803]

Capricorn December 12 – It looks as though things are suddenly up in the air with your friend, or the group. This is fine, because you have options. And over the long term, it may be that your first decision, way back in October or November, was **the result of thinking on the run**. Sometimes the universe intervenes to show you what might, perhaps, be a better bet. [H-15]

Both examples mention consequences or results of certain actions. Both are enigmatic enough to satisfy multiple interpretations. Technically speaking, the construction of the content is perfectly correct since there is always a cause to an effect. Though the message might seem rather casual, its reasonability is unquestionable, which might, indeed, make the horoscope convincing.

5.5.5.5 Summary

Thanks to the feature of technicisation and professionalisation, whose linguistic manifestations have been discussed above, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes create an illusion of credibility and authority. This may contribute to the perception of the horoscopolical messages as factual, while they are, in fact, only symbolic.

5.5.6 Language of success in the discourse of the beauty myth – summary

The word *success* itself appears eight times in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, plus two occurrences of the word *successfully*. This does not seem much. However, the concept of broadly understood success is present in all horoscopolical texts and manifests itself through various linguistic indicators that are characteristic for the features of the language of success.

The assumptions of the use of the language of success agree with the overall *Cosmopolitan* ideology directed at and focused on happiness, pleasure, self-fulfilment, career, independence, well-being and beauty. Or perhaps, through the language of success, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology is actually being realised. And since the *Cosmopolitan* ideology gives plenty of space for the beauty myth to function, the assumption can be risked that the language of success may well realise the concepts of the beauty myth.

The discourse of success and happiness serves the beauty myth since it may create illusions of ostensibly achievable goals. It also as if artificially winds up the never-ending search and race for it. Horoscopical messages make promises, speak of potential, encourage action. There seems to be nothing wrong in this. However, the discourse does not end within a few horoscopical forecasts. It is “decorated” with particular visions of broadly understood beauty, lifestyle and success, and it creates a particular linguistic-cultural image of women. The horoscopical texts are only a part of the discourse within which the beauty myth operates. They are submerged in the context made of other texts, pictures, advertisements etc. subordinated to and working for the advantage of the assumptions and purposes of consumerist culture.

CHAPTER SIX

Axiological dimension of the discourse of the beauty myth

The crucial concept and assumption of the following dissertation is that the beauty myth is constantly being realised through discourse. Here, the representation of the discourse in question is narrowed to the specific genre of horoscopes. The horoscopes, on the other hand, are only a minor part of the *Cosmopolitan* vision of the world and of woman.

The beauty myth seems to successfully function in linguistic and extralinguistic reality thanks to a number of paradoxes which are introduced at the level of language and are more or less imperceptibly exploited at the level of myth. The stereotypes and values conveyed in words contribute to the persuasive character of the myth which uses the conceptual frames of words and expressions in order to fulfil its marketing purposes.

It is important to realise that the essence of the beauty myth is not beauty at all. It uses particular images of beauty, specific visions of lifestyle, success and happiness, socially acceptable linguistic-cultural pictures of women (and men) only to fulfil and assist the expectations and requirements of the consumerist market systems and power structures. The myth is not restricted to appearance but embraces far more complicated and compound images, actions and processes that contribute to the shaping of individual identities, the sense of self-esteem, and functioning in the socio-cultural reality.

6.1 Beauty myth and values

Values are what socio-cultural reality is constructed on. Value systems differ to a greater or lesser extent among various social communities, and they also experience changes with the passing of time and generations due to the advance of science and technology, the influence of mass media, historical turbulence, socio-cultural phenomena or the requirements of the political-financial systems.

Generally approved hierarchies of values put in order what is acceptable and desirable in a given society, what is considered a virtue or what is approved as positive, as well as what

counts as a sin, mischief or an inadequate or inappropriate attitude or behaviour. Obviously, the general hierarchy of values established in a particular culture and society only partially contributes to individual hierarchies that differ from one person to another. Without going into detail, let us just mention that *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes refer to both, although more often to the personal. The point is that the horoscopolical messages, in fact, represent the general. Furthermore, the horoscopolical messages sometimes also try to expose allegedly opposite value systems, simultaneously subtly suggesting the one which is more sensible or more desirable. Yet another message that comes from the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes is that individual value systems may undergo reordering under the influence of the outer world and personal dilemmas.

The very word *value(s)* keeps reappearing in the corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. Its total count is eleven occurrences (including one as a verb and one in the expression *value system*; moreover, in one of the horoscopes the word *values* appears twice), which is definitely not the highest occurrence. However, assuming that words carry and convey values, linguistic manifestations of valuing can be observed throughout the whole corpus of texts as well as in the linguistic and extralinguistic indicators in the immediate and further context.

To begin with, let us consider some example horoscopes actually containing the word *value(s)*:

Taurus January 16 – Your former, current or potential partner is at the heart of big questions. You have to be honest and say there are two kinds of Taurus women. One kind would rather commit to a man because of the status and comfort – not to mention the property or lifestyle gains. Another kind has totally different **values** and loves her freedom, wildness and oxygen. [H-335]

The above-mentioned horoscope concerns the values of freedom, independence, wildness and oxygen as opposed to the values of comfort, high social status, financial security and a high standard of living. If these values were presented in isolation, they could all be considered as equally positive for one reason or another. However, juxtaposing them, especially in the context of *Cosmopolitan* ideology, results in a kind of distortion. Furthermore, it seems quite inconsistent with the *Cosmopolitan* ideology to imply that a woman can only be economically and socially successful if she commits to a man. Allegedly, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology promotes women's independence and success, but the horoscopolical message almost explicitly states that financial and lifestyle benefits can only be achieved through a relationship with a man.

Another horoscope, on the other hand, concerns some values which the *Cosmopolitan* woman is confused about. As the horoscopolical message implies, these are connected with the woman's principles and ethics. However, the text does not specify the value category.

Capricorn February 3 – If you were confused about your **values**, the confusion stops shortly. Your **values**, in this specific case, revolved around your principles and ethics. But also, perhaps who or what you figured was priceless (money could not buy it). Nothing in astrology is random, and all the little stories that have been building around you since November teach you the same thing. That 1998-2011 belongs in the distant past. [H-423]

Yet another text refers to the value system of the *Cosmopolitan* woman as seen and judged by other people. It implies that the woman's appearance, behaviour and possessions represent her system of values which is subject to people's judgement. This assessment is based on general social expectations.

Cancer February 7 – There are some questions here about how your **values** look to other people, or how you feel about others judging your house, your business, your possessions, your apartment, your bank account! This is pretty minor compared to the possibilities, though. Expect one of those pinging moments of truth by tomorrow. You have the numbers, either in the post or on your computer screen. Now do the maths! [H-475]

In another horoscope, the *Cosmopolitan* woman's value system is presented as changeable. But the horoscope seems to remind that there are rules to follow.

Capricorn February 20 – Oh look. There are rules. There never used to be, where money, business or property was concerned. Or precious possessions. Even your own **value system** was subject to tidal waves and odd currents. You have been safely deposited on the shore, though, in a new world which has edges, and boundaries and everything. And today shows you what's what, at last. [H-596]

The example horoscopes reveal that the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life is governed by values. They equal a specific code of conduct and a relatively stable consideration of the positive and the negative, a set of principles and ethics. What is positive or negative, however, often seems to relate to what the *Cosmopolitan* ideology considers "*Cosmopolitan-like*", "*Cosmopolitan enough*" or "*not Cosmopolitan at all*". Obviously, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology appreciates and imposes a particular compilation of values. Women aspiring to be *Cosmopolitan* are naturally supposed to acquire them as their own.

The beauty myth eagerly and successfully uses values – in compliance with its specificity, it distorts them so that the values become somewhat mythical. Based upon unreasonably overgeneralised assumptions, the horoscopolical messages pose ostensible

dilemmas which, paradoxically, considerably reinforce stereotypical images and, therefore, claims of the beauty myth.

The *Cosmopolitan* ideology positively values a number of concepts. Simultaneously, as usually shown in the horoscopolical texts by contrast, the discourse reveals which concepts are negatively valued. However, the horoscope messages often cause confusion when, for example, exposing the benefits of allegedly negatively valued ideas. Obviously, one cannot have both. One concept excludes the other. Moreover, some positively valued concepts pose limitations – for instance, self-constituency, freedom and wildness are highly appreciated and promoted but the woman always has to reconsider the potential consequences of her actions, not necessarily because they might turn out to be harmful or disadvantageous to herself, in terms of health, for example, but this may not look well in the eyes of the world that is watching her steps. It is a matter of her reputation, the spectacle of her life is constantly being observed by the judging audience. The *Cosmopolitan* woman has to adjust her social profile to ever-changing socio-cultural and political demands.

6.1.1 Freedom and independence as positive values

Freedom and independence have always been unquestionable values. They immediately evoke positive associations which, as Grygiel (2013: 161-179) proves with regard to his reconstruction of the concept of freedom in the Serbian language, are multiple and may be classified in terms of formal type as contrastive, metaphorical and metonymic associations as well as approached in terms of meaning as different conceptualisations. In regard to meaning, the linguist divides associations into the conceptualisations of freedom as (1) personal freedom, (2) independence, (3) struggle for liberty, (4) a bird, (5) boundless space, (6) blue and white colours, (7) a white horse, (8) a place where one feels at ease, (9) nature, (10) a bridge, (11) free will, and (12) the highest value (: 165-176). Furthermore, according to Grygiel, the liberal understanding of freedom, with an individual's rights valued more than these of community, happens to be associated mainly with Western Europe and broadly understood western civilisation (: 166).

In the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the concept of freedom combines at least some of the conceptualisations described by the researcher. It certainly denotes the right to be and do what one wishes, to express oneself freely and to make one's own choices without being controlled or restricted by other people or institutions. The concept of independence is similar, though not interchangeable. Its conceptual frames assume someone or something that one may (or

may not) be independent of. The concept also evokes the association with political freedom from control by the government or institutional systems of various kind, or the freedom and ability to make one's own decisions in private life without any obligation to ask other people for permission, help or money. Financial independence counts for a lot nowadays.

Freedom and independence, therefore, are commonly considered as positive values. To put it in the more linguistic terms that Puzynina (1991: 130-132) suggests, freedom and independence are what (people in general, a group of people and) the addresser believes (believe to be good) and acknowledges (acknowledge) to be good.

In the *Cosmopolitan* ideology, the concepts of freedom and independence are promoted and are highly desirable. The freedom of self-constituency happens to be an essential keystone in the *Cosmopolitan* approach.

The word *freedom* has 49 occurrences (including one in plural) in the corpus, plus 23 occurrences of the word *free* (including two occurrences of the expression *free spirit*, two of *free woman*, one of *free agent* and one of *free as a bird*). The noun *independence* appears 12 times, the adjective *independent* – 6 times. Furthermore, *freedom and independence* appear combined together seven times. Other similar word combinations are, for example, *freedom and autonomy* (one occurrence), *freedom and space of being your own woman* (one occurrence), *independence and space* (one occurrence), and a mixture of three concepts – *freedom and independence (and glorious space)* – appears once.

Let us analyse the further context, though, to see how the concepts (and values) of freedom and independence are used and become mythicized to serve the beauty myth. Please consider a few examples (there are more examples this time, but this is done here intentionally in order to point out yet another thought-provoking issue):

Pisces February 24 – The asteroid Juno in your house of career, university life and volunteering is reminding you of two things. **Firstly, you can't have total freedom and security at the same time. Secondly, being utterly independent means you lose guarantees. So what are you going to do?** [H-643]

The horoscope above clearly states that the *Cosmopolitan* woman cannot be free and secure simultaneously. It tries to convince that once she chooses independence, she loses the guarantees of comfort and safety.

The next horoscope is similar. The same values are presented as opposed to each other.

Aquarius December 26 – Boxing Day shows you what a mini wrestling-match your career or life at university is. **In the red corner you have yourself, as a free woman – without any position or particular place – but totally independent. In the blue corner you have your contracted, locked-down self. She’s got the kudos and the security, but no freedom. What to do?** [H-139]

The same values are also juxtaposed in another example. The *Cosmopolitan* woman is left with a decision to make. She has to choose if she wants to be free or secure. She also has to remember that one excludes the other.

Pisces December 26 – The world of travel, different nationalities, publishing or education whirls around your head. **And only you can decide if you would rather be free, and out on your own – or cosy and secure. Of course, one woman’s ‘cosiness’ is another woman’s ball and chain. But then again, when you are your own person, there is absolutely no guarantee of security!** [H-140]

The horoscope which follows claims that the choice between being single and independent or married and of high social and financial status is the dilemma for all women in the world.

Capricorn December 26 – You have a friend or acquaintance (in your tribe, online or offline) who sums up **the big dilemma for women everywhere. Should we be single and free, or shackled up and shackled? This female in your life either loves being married or de facto, and having the prestige and comfort – or she’d rather be out in the woods. Or out on the town. And you?** [H-141]

Another horoscope presents the dilemma as one of those which are particularly fundamental in the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s life.

Sagittarius December 26 – Your dreams are quite interesting at the moment, as they reflect **your deepest dilemmas about being a free woman, or belonging to a man.** You will sort out quite a lot this way. Or maybe you’re having strange cosmic experiences relating to those questions! **Watch for peacocks and dogs as symbols. Peacocks belong. Dogs run free. And you?** [H-142]

Yet another text implies that the *Cosmopolitan* woman can be herself and feel free only if she decides against what is offered to her. She is supposed to choose between independence and promises.

Scorpio December 26 – Some questions about your public profile, online reputation, face, body or general me-ness are surfacing right now. **If you accept a particular situation now on offer, you exchange independence for promises. If you decide against it, then you have spontaneity back in your life, and self-mastery – but you really will be on your own.** [H-143]

Another horoscope warns that even though the values of freedom and independence are dearest, they never ensure a comfortable lifestyle and security.

Libra December 26 – Juno and Diana, two important asteroids, now sit in your house of money, Christmas presents, houses, apartments and business interests. **Juno always asks you if you want to have comfort, safety, security and belonging – or if you'd prefer to cut loose. Diana always reminds you that glorious freedom and independence never offers any guarantees.** [H-144]

The next example text yet again reminds that the choice between belonging and the sense of security is the *Cosmopolitan* woman's.

Virgo December 26 – Communication is the key to your emotions now, according to your horoscope. So it's about the internet and the phone, and perhaps the cards in the post. However, this is also about broader communication; being heard or read as you wish. **Only you can decide if it's better to have security and belonging in the situation, or to absolutely go your own way.** [H-145]

Another horoscope implies that both alternatives have their advantages and disadvantages which the *Cosmopolitan* woman has to consider.

Leo December 26 – Well of course it's about the family, the house, the flatmates or the apartment at this time of year. Or maybe the accommodation, full stop – as well as the relatives. **You are now being shown the pros and cons of belonging, and being tied down on some level. Are you a free spirit at heart who craves an unlocked door? Or do you need uber security?** [H-146]

The metaphors used in the next example imply quite clearly what the *Cosmopolitan* ideology is in favour of. However, the horoscope only raises questions which the *Cosmopolitan* woman should consider and answer herself.

Cancer December 26 – Matters of the heart, soul or perhaps the knickers are affecting one in two Cancerian women. **Do you want to be a domestic goddess, and a bird in a gilded cage? Or do you want to fly your own way? For the remaining Cancerians, there are big questions about pregnancy, dating a Dad, or your tiny relatives and friends' kids. Freedom or not?** [H-147]

The next horoscopolical text has a very similar content. It expresses the same meaning, but with different words.

Gemini December 26 – The focus is on your job, your diet, your life at university, your fitness or your volunteer role. **The question is, how do you feel about being locked in, and tied down? Does it make you feel as if you belong to someone,**

or something? Or do you crave the freedom and space of being your own woman? Only you can figure out these soul questions. [H-148]

In the last example, the message is formulated in exactly the same way.

Aries January 27 – You have moved into a much easier place in terms of money, business, houses, possessions or apartments. **The big either-or debate that was taking place (you can either have independence and space OR security and comfort) is disappearing.** The asteroid Diana is watching over this area of your destiny now. And **she's just all about the lovely freedom.** [H-384]

The concept of freedom and independence, which is unquestionably positively valued at the language level, becomes distorted due to its juxtaposition with comfort, possessions and financial benefits, security, safety and belonging to someone or something. The horoscopolical message is clear and straightforward enough – the woman cannot have both. The dilemma is no more than ostensible, since whichever she decides to choose, she loses the other. Whether the woman chooses one alternative or the other, she stays in exactly the same position. The trick is that what is on offer when choosing belonging are other positively valued concepts, such as the sense of safety, stability and comfort. The mythicised concept of freedom and safety, therefore, smuggles the conviction that it is risky, offers no guarantees, and that if the woman chooses the comfort and safety that is always associated with what can be guaranteed only by belonging to a man, she loses part of her identity of a free spirit. This mythicised concept of freedom and independence is repeated over and over again and so becomes naturalized and taken for granted.

Another issue which might at first sight seem secondary to the study, the issue which was only signalled before enlisting the horoscopes in this subchapter, is as follows: an attentive reader has certainly noticed that ten of the above examples concern the same day – December 26th. This might yet again denote a certain bias and an intentional, tendentious character of the horoscopolical content subjected to the overall *Cosmopolitan* ideology, and to the beauty myth as well.

6.1.2 Self-constituency as a positive value

The *Cosmopolitan* woman is allowed to make decisions concerning her own life, especially when it comes to her body, sexuality, relationships, motherhood or career. It might seem that being self-sufficient and self-constituent should make the woman strong, reasonable and

open-minded enough to allow her to create a stable personality and provide her with an unshakeable foundation for her female identity.

Self-constituency is strongly related to freedom and independence. Yet it seems to be even more essentially concerned with the shaping of individual identity, considering oneself as a person, as a woman, as well as viewing oneself in relation to others. It is connected with self-esteem, respect, the sense of security and self-agency.

At the level of myth, and to its advantage, the value of self-constituency intentionally distorted. On the one hand, self-constituency is promoted; on the other hand, it turns out it has limits. The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopolical texts convey contradictory messages, such as: do with your body and appearance what you wish, but be aware of the people watching you, feel free to experience your sexuality and femaleness but watch out for your reputation, express yourself freely but bear in mind your social profile, take a decision on becoming a mum but beware of the repercussions it may have on your life, get involved in intimate relationships but avoid dating dads, or think twice before getting involved since it may equal losing part of your identity and freedom, etc. On the whole, the concepts of self-constituency and self-agency mostly refer to making personal decisions, resolving dilemmas connected with personal experience.

Let us consider a few selected horoscopes. The first example highlights the importance of self-mastery and encourages to reject what is imposed:

Scorpio December 26 – Some questions about your public profile, online reputation, face, body or general me-ness are surfacing right now. **If you accept a particular situation now on offer, you exchange independence for promises. If you decide against it, then you have spontaneity back in your life, and self-mastery – but you really will be on your own.** [H-143]

Another example advises the *Cosmopolitan* woman to consider a deeply personal issue in terms of the consequences that may follow.

Aries March 9 – If you are single and thinking about pursuing someone new, **check** that he/she is not just a way to parcel up any fears you might have. **Otherwise you'll live with the consequences.** A partnership which is full of 'tasks' doesn't get any easier. But you are becoming much wiser. [H-808]

The next horoscope implies that the *Cosmopolitan* woman may have made some bad choices in the past, but she can still improve the situation if she takes some action and follows a new direction.

Sagittarius December 13 – **You probably feel as if you followed a trail that led nowhere**, in terms of your appearance, identity, profile, reputation, name or ‘Me’ packaging. That is correct. You did. But the trail will appear again, leading you in a new direction. Or **you may decide to take another path**, as the old life directions no longer work! By January it’s all in the bag. [H-28]

The next example horoscope raises questions for the *Cosmopolitan* woman to answer. It also speaks of a situation in which the woman is advised to set boundaries. According to the horoscope, it should be her initiative.

Taurus March 11 – Well, this is new. **Do you want comfort and security with the money, house, flat or business? Or do you prefer absolute freedom and independence?** There’s also another story emerging now. It’s about your friend, or the group. **Only you can decide how far, is too far.** [H-831]

Similarly, another horoscopolical text emphasises that the *Cosmopolitan* woman should consider an important issue herself in order to make her own decision. It is implied that the decision is too private to share it with anybody, and it is too serious to be hasty.

Pisces March 27 – Because you can’t tell anybody about this, **it necessarily has to be a private decision.** But it would be anyway, because nobody can argue the point. **You have to debate it with yourself.** This is classified. Allow time and space. [H-990]

Another horoscope is similar too. It concerns a deeply personal decision which the *Cosmopolitan* woman should make herself. The problem which she has to consider is connected with her sexuality, children in her life or motherhood.

Libra March 27 – This is about contraception or dating a Dad. Or alternatively about a child or baby in your world, or children en masse. Someone (or something) would fix everything. But **only you can judge it, and it has to be a personal decision.** [H-994]

The last example also leaves the decision to the *Cosmopolitan* woman claiming that she is the only person to do this.

Leo March 27 – There is major movement with a former, current or potential partner. And maybe with a great enemy. **Only you can decide what is ‘good’ even though there are many shades of grey.** Talk about weighing a moral issue or two... [H-996]

The *Cosmopolitan* woman is constantly being reassured that only she can make decisions about her life. The dilemmas she is most often confronted with concern her

sexuality and intimate relationships, motherhood and being dependent on or independent of men. Most often, the dilemma comes down to choosing between being a free spirit or being chained to a man or children with all the consequences this may entail. The concept of freedom is, however, vague. It is pictured as something desirable, yet dangerous and risky, although it is not clear what the risks might be. The *Cosmopolitan* woman does learn, on the other hand, what she may gain if she chooses to exchange her freedom for belonging to a man – security, money and a comfortable life. Having children also requires reconsideration, for the decision entails serious consequences for the woman. Interestingly enough, having children does not necessarily mean bearing children herself but may involve a relationship with a father. Self-constituency and self-agency also involve setting boundaries and considering moral issues. The paradox of the decisions that the *Cosmopolitan* woman has to make is that they should be simultaneously compatible with both her self and with what is expected of her. The horoscopolical messages are usually suggestive, and their content often indicates and exposes the preferred and truly *Cosmopolitan* values and choices.

In the same way as in the case of the concepts of freedom and independence, the concepts of self-constituency and self-agency reappear on a regular basis in the corpus. In this way the concepts become naturalized so that the reader tends not to consider it as false or in any way deceptive.

The concept of self-constituency and self-mastery may also be strongly connected with the sense of control over oneself in one's private life or work, or else with not letting particular people, organisations or institutions take control over one's choices and actions. The following horoscopes reveal how paradoxical the issue of control may be:

Scorpio January 13 – A famous postcard was once produced, showing a woman working in a print factory, with the legend **'The freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press.'** Now, it may be newspapers, magazines or books which dot the landscape. Or Twitter, Facebook, blogs or websites. Or SMS messages. But at last, Scorpio, **you're taking control.** [H-309]

To some extent, the horoscope above speaks of the issue of control in terms of language as a reality-shaping and reality-controlling means. The paradoxical caption quoted in the horoscope becomes particularly meaningful in the context of the present research. It actually reveals how manipulative the character of various discourses might be. Eventually, the horoscope tries to convince that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is taking control at last.

Another horoscope states clearly that the *Cosmopolitan* woman cannot allow particular people or organisations to control her.

Gemini January 14 – What you might call ‘matters of a joint financial nature’ (the rent, the credit card, the family inheritance, the business and so on) now looms large. But this is the turning point. **You simply cannot let particular people or organisations control you any more.** And there are options. **By saying a firm no to control freaks, in all their guises, life offers alternatives.** [H-322]

In the next text, it is implied that the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s way to total control of her personal and emotional life might encounter difficulties. However, even though the horoscope begins with a little pessimistic note, the final sentence states that the woman is in charge of her life again. It is good news since she can now manage her life herself.

Virgo February 12 – **Before you can feel fully in control of the most personal, heartfelt, emotional issues, you have to go through the tumbledrier of destiny.** The tumbledrier of destiny took you all over the place in 2011. Maybe the pregnancies, babies or children in your world were involved. (The kids didn’t have to be your own). Maybe it was just about sex and where it would take you. Good news. **You’re in charge of your life again.** [H-509]

Yet another horoscope concerns a lack of control over the issues connected with home, family or neighbourhood. However, the horoscopolical message ends with an optimistic statement that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is gradually regaining balance and control.

Scorpio February 20 – It’s been like living on a drifting houseboat for over a decade. Or finding out there are mermaids in the family. Or strange, unfathomable sea creatures. **The zone of your horoscope which rules your home life, family relationships, lease, mortgage, renovations, neighbourhood, homeland has been...impossible to control.** Well, **that control is gradually coming back now.** [H-598]

The next horoscope implies that the *Cosmopolitan* woman is uncertain about her control over an issue. The horoscope does not specify what the issue might be; it only claims that it concerns something the woman avoids talking about or exposing. According to the horoscopolical message, it is the woman herself who seems to sabotage her own sense of control.

Aquarius March 16 – **What you don’t talk about, show or share seems to be the one area where you’re not in control.** Or, more accurately, **you feel in control for a time, then lose it. Who or what is behind this? Strangely, it’s you!** Look deeper. [H-881]

The last example concerns the restrictions which may affect the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s sense of self. It also states that the woman has lost control over certain issues due to

a lack of time and opportunity. However, the horoscope convinces that it is now time for her to regain control.

Capricorn January 13 – It looks as though you’ve had quite enough of living with a particular set of restrictions. Fair enough. It’s personal because it affects you (as in ‘you, you, you’) and it feels very tied to your sense of self or ego. Sometimes life just runs away with you. **A lack of time or opportunity has stopped you from halting things and taking control. Now you can.** [H-307]

To sum up, the very first of the above horoscopes reveals how paradoxical the issue of power and control may become. Though the sense of power and control over one’s life is crucial for security and for building a relatively stable sense of identity, it may turn out to be only illusory. The horoscope messages seem to encourage taking control over one’s life and rejecting subordination to “particular people or organisations”. But the concept of control in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes also refers to everyday activities, emotions and situations. Once disturbed or lost, this control in everyday reality has to be regained. Paradoxically, this may contribute to sustaining the stereotypical image of women as those who tend to lose control easily and are vulnerable to being controlled.

6.1.3 Education and career as positive values

Education and university life is a subject which reappears constantly in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. One of the obvious reasons is the target audience for which the *Cosmopolitan* ideology is intended. Career as a subject appears with similar frequency. Furthermore, the concepts are usually combined together.

Education and career are valued positively since they broaden horizons, entail more possibilities in different fields of life, affect social status or help in building up independence. Not surprisingly, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is therefore supposed to be a young, well-educated career woman.

However, the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes provide somewhat contradictory messages. On the one hand, they promote education, knowledge, broadening the mind and having a professional career that should, theoretically at least, ensure independence, financial security and comfort. On the other hand, however, the horoscopes continue to convince that the woman cannot have both – independence and financial security or comfort. These latter can only be guaranteed by a relationship with a man.

The myth says, therefore, that even though it is possible for a woman to be successful, since she has the necessary tools, her success has limits unless she chooses to belong to a man who seems to have achieved and to possess more, and may, thus, offer her safety, money and comfort. University education and professional career appear not to constitute the necessary and sufficient condition that would guarantee achieving safety, financial security and comfortable life. Men, however, do offer this guarantee.

6.1.4 Progress, improvement and ambitions as positive values

Being ambitious, exploring one's potential, continuous self-improvement, moving forwards boldly – these are also values considered as positive and promoted in the *Cosmopolitan* ideology. They are closely linked to education and career. *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes seem to reflect this ideology:

Capricorn December 15 – The lifestyle you deserve is a combination of the best daily routine for you, the liveliest good health and **a role you feel fulfilled by. It may involve work, study or volunteering.** At the moment, the universe is showing you glimpses of what might be, in 2012. **Think big and do not think any person, organisation, place or option is beyond you!** [H-39]

The horoscope above speaks of a role the *Cosmopolitan* woman may feel fulfilled by and enlists work, study and volunteering as those activities which may assure this. Furthermore, the woman is encouraged to be ambitious.

The next horoscope is similar. It foresees spectacular changes in terms of career or university life if only the *Cosmopolitan* woman takes ambitious steps.

Virgo December 15 – Join the dots, and you will see how one corner of your career or university picture is being filled in, six months before it happens. People and organisations which are only interested in solutions and growth, are coming into your world. **The sky is really the limit, and even if you're not used to thinking this big, it's time to slowly accept what might be.** [H-43]

In the horoscope below, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is assured that she can achieve what she wants if she finds motivation to persistently work on her goals. As the horoscope implies, even though there is little day-to-day motivation at the moment, the situation is going to improve soon.

Leo February 26 – **You can now see two, maybe three, even four ways to get what you want from your dearest-held ambitions.** But the missing ingredient is day-to-day motivation. This could be so big, you have to give it your all, and then some. Fortunately **that motivation is coming.** [H-673]

Yet another horoscope envisages great chances and opportunities in terms of the woman's financial or business situation.

Leo February 25 – Someone or something is shining a torch on your money, property or business situation. And a torch is what you need. **The chances to expand your mission, position or ambition go on. Every step you take helps the overall journey.** And by June this could be epic. [H-661]

The *Cosmopolitan* woman is being reassured here that she has both every right, and the right conditions, to achieve her goals, to become a self-fulfilled woman and to develop successfully under favorable circumstances – if only she takes up the challenge. The horoscope messages convince the reader that there are practically no limits and the woman can achieve what she wants.

In seven horoscopes in the corpus, ambition was mentioned together with position and mission. This may suggest that the concepts have something in common. Apparently, particular ambitions point to and help in the achievement of a particular social or professional position, or else intensify the sense of mission in private or professional life. Alternatively, and more probably, the three – ambition, mission and position – denote exactly the same, that is a particular goal to be achieved.

Progress, positive changes and improvements are all possible thanks to the situations in which the *Cosmopolitan* woman finds herself, a set of circumstances, and potential to be explored to her advantage. She is shown a potential and encouraged to benefit from it. This, again, comes as no surprise since the generic specificity of horoscopes makes them “foresee” and inform us of positive upcoming changes, or else merely include a cautionary note to prevent any negative experiences. Let us examine a few examples:

Cancer December 15 – What's unfolding in your life (your very secret life) or your inner world, is no accident. **This little patchwork of possibilities is designed to take you higher,** in about six months' time. The right place, situation or person is in front of you, and through six degrees of distance, **you will be connected to the most incredible changes and improvements.** [H-45]

The above-mentioned horoscope implies there are some possibilities to be explored by the *Cosmopolitan* woman. It also envisages that she is going to experience incredible changes and improvements soon.

The next horoscope, on the other hand, speaks of too little engagement on the part of the woman, or a situation which may have prevented her from achieving success, but it also states that there is some huge potential which will certainly change things for better.

Taurus December 15 – What seems to be fleeting and temporary is actually the key to unlock a financial, property or business door in 2012. You are around six months ahead of yourself, but that's perfectly fine. **You've been thinking too small, or you've been stuck in a situation which you are outgrowing.** It's very early days but **there is terrific potential ahead.** [H-47]

Similarly, another horoscope predicts an amazing potential to explore. This time, however, the forthcoming changes concern an overall image of the woman.

Taurus December 20 – What you cover up from other people, call classified, or do alone is about to trigger all kinds of exciting options you had never fully thought out, before. And the future shall set you free...Meanwhile it's pretty clear that **there is huge potential waiting to be unlocked for you personally, in terms of your name, face, image or 'Brand Taurus.'** It's so close. [H-107]

In conclusion, being ambitious, setting goals and making progress are positively valued concepts. *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes often speak of improvement and potentials awaiting to be explored. Often, the messages announce spectacular changes, although that they are never more closely specified, is typical of the genre.

6.1.5 Family and friends as positive values

Family and friends constitute a significant part of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life. This is unequivocally reflected in the number of occurrences of the concepts in the corpus of horoscopes.

The general term *family* appears 107 times. This proves that family matters are of particular importance. However, what does the concept of family actually include in the *Cosmopolitan* ideology? Who actually belongs to the *Cosmopolitan* woman's family? Though the concept of mother keeps reappearing, it rarely indicates the relationship with the *Cosmopolitan* woman's own mother. It is more often limited to the *Cosmopolitan* woman's own concept of motherhood and the benefits and values or else sacrifices which the role of

being a mother may entail. The horoscopolical messages often manifest a reconsideration of the idea. Some almost explicitly indicate the inconveniences connected with having children. The decision belongs to the *Cosmopolitan* woman.

Libra February 3 – You have been living in an altered state, or different reality, for years. Your horoscope points to intimacy as the main area of this unreality – especially in terms of all those **questions about having children one day, or not. Or dating Dads, or not!** There are also broader questions about what you'll leave of yourself, to those born a generation after you. From 7pm the 'other world' collapses. You're back in the room. [H-426]

The horoscope above highlights the dilemma connected with the issue of motherhood in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life. The horoscope below, on the other hand, implies quite explicitly that motherhood entails life-long commitment. It also means a loss of freedom. It is, however the woman, who has to make her own decision.

Cancer February 13 – The asteroid Diana is **in your house of sex and children**. She is reminding you that **true freedom exists only when there is no compromise and no forever commitment. You're either going to pursue that, or reject it. It depends on your priorities, no matter if love is the issue, or other people's kids are.** You also have a money, property or business discussion or letter, after tonight. You can see clearly now the fog's gone. [H-523]

Another example speaks in more general terms. It implies that the woman faces some personal and very intimate dilemmas which concern her sexuality.

Sagittarius March 2 – Give yourself about six weeks until you know exactly where you stand with **questions about pregnancy, the world of children or sex.** This is a strange time when there will be lots of hold-ups or u-turns. A major change is in store at the end of April though. You'll be free. [H-717]

The next example also focuses on the questions of sexuality and children in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life, and it implies that this dilemma creates tension.

Taurus March 15 – **The children in your world (or sex questions which won't disappear) seem to be creating tension.** As in (strangled voice) tensssshion. It stops in about a month, when you sort things out at last. For now, just plan. And plot. [H-879]

The horoscope below is similar. It reveals that the questions of sexuality, motherhood and children cause emotional tension which the *Cosmopolitan* woman has to face.

Virgo March 15 – **You have to find your own way through the emotional maze. What you’ve been going through makes you more honest with yourself about sex, future parenthood (yes? no?) or the wider world of children.** The true answer is close. [H-875]

Texts that indicate having a child as a positive experience, offering potential and inspiring changes are also present, however, in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. Nonetheless, rarely is it made clear and explicit that being a mum is exactly what may bring happiness and fulfilment to the *Cosmopolitan* woman. Consider these:

Sagittarius December 22 – **The part that babies, children or young teens play in your future (the next generation) just changed for the better. What you have here is a creative, exciting, brand new possibility you never anticipated.** This might also apply to a sexual relationship where you might – one day – have a baby or take on someone else’s kids or godchildren. [H-112]

The whole above-mentioned horoscope concentrates on the issue of parenthood and children, and predicts that this experience is going to be surprisingly good, creative and exciting. The next horoscope also implies that the world of children may amazingly influence the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s life.

Sagittarius December 20 – **The world of babies, children or teens could turn your life around, in amazing new directions, as if it had all just been put through a glittering revolving door of change.** 2012 could be so full of potential for you. If the next generation is not calling you, then a relationship certainly is. This could result in parenthood one day, or stepmum status! [H-100]

In yet another horoscope, it is implied that children will enrich the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s life more than she expects.

Aquarius January 13 – **The world of babies, children or young people will deliver more to you than you imagine,** in the final six months of 2012. One situation which relates to this is already forming in your life. New people, places or possibilities (or projects) which arrived at the end of last year are meant to be. So follow the cosmic signs and clues and keep going. [H-305]

The concept of father, on the other hand, only occurs in the context of a romantic-sexual relationship between the *Cosmopolitan* woman and a dad (a man who already has children with another woman and is single (or not?)). Regardless, the idea of getting involved in such a relationship is according to the horoscopes rather inadvisable. In this case, the horoscopes also indicate that getting involved in such a situation requires a choice between

freedom and self-sacrifice, between independence and dependence. See the following example:

Cancer December 26 – Matters of the heart, soul or perhaps the knickers are affecting one in two Cancerian women. **Do you want to be a domestic goddess, and a bird in a gilded cage? Or do you want to fly your own way?** For the remaining Cancerians, **there are big questions about pregnancy, dating a Dad, or your tiny relatives and friends' kids. Freedom or not?** [H-147]

Other relatives that are mentioned in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes include children and teenage members of the family. Their role is often unclear, apart from what is supposed to help the *Cosmopolitan* woman realise the pros and cons of parenthood.

Scorpio February 1 – This is an epic astrological cycle for **making babies under confusing conditions**, so if you don't want one (or he doesn't) then heed your horoscope and look the condoms in the eye. **Other people's children** (young relatives, friends' kids, professional involvements with younger people) **are also in the picture**. That agreement needs watching from a distance. [H-401]

The horoscope quoted above implies that the issue of children enters the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life in one way or another. This may concern the woman's choice between being a mother or not, or it may concern the influence which children may have on her life.

The next horoscope also focuses on children, although the text implies that the concern is a professional or voluntary issue. It also raises questions of sex, contraception and potential parenthood.

Aquarius February 2 – **This is about other people's children** – so young relatives or godchildren. It may also be about babies, kids or teenagers en masse, so **maybe there is a professional or voluntary concern**. Finally, **there is the epic question of sex, contraception, dating Dads...and your own feelings about potential parenthood**. Today's task? Work a big soulful question. [H-409]

The horoscope which follows is similar to the one above. It also speaks of parenthood and the *Cosmopolitan* woman's professional or charity involvement with children.

Scorpio February 19 – Maybe your dynasty is a long way off. **It's going to depend on the right guy (or sperm donor), correct? Or finding a dad to date?** In other cases, it can feel as if the dynasty is right here. **It's manifesting through a young relative or godchild, or through kids you have a professional or charity involvement with**. Whatever your personal situation tonight, Keep It Really Real! [H-586]

Finally, the last example implies that the world of children may help the *Cosmopolitan* woman to deal with a situation she is facing. Careful observation of the young in her immediate vicinity may hide some clues for her to use.

Aquarius February 9 – **The world of pregnancy, babies and children holds a special message of support and true backing for you.** Look back and see. This will help you with quite another matter, which keeps pushing through into your consciousness, no matter how often you try to forget it. **It may be a child you babysat, or a niece in your family circle. It could be a kids' project. But that's your clue and your key.** Take a second look. [H-479]

In conclusion, the concept of family seems somewhat limited in the *Cosmopolitan* ideology. Even though it reappears very frequently, which is consistent with the basic assumptions of the genre, its conceptualisation is narrowed to a great extent to man-woman relationships. These relationships, in addition, are very loose as is the matter of parenthood. The *Cosmopolitan* woman appears as a person who does not build close relationships with people (the consequence of which might, allegedly, be becoming enslaved in one way or another) and who is surrounded by people unable to build such relationships (e.g. single dads).

Is the concept of friendship different in any way? After reading the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, one may have an impression that friends are first and foremost useful. Observing friends, their lives and choices is supposed to help the *Cosmopolitan* woman to make her own decisions, and work out her dilemmas. These most often concern motherhood or involvement in a relationship. The value of friendship is reduced to its usefulness.

Aquarius March 11 – **Through friends, or the group, you are being shown a choice.** Do you want prestige, comfort and belonging? Or freedom, spontaneity and wildness? The real priority now, though, should be your hopes for the house or flat. Something is looking so possible, today. [H-821]

In the horoscope above, friends are presented as those whom the *Cosmopolitan* woman may observe in order to help herself to make her own choices. Friends represent different visions which she may consider.

The horoscope below is very similar. It also speaks of two different friends who represent two different attitudes and two different sets of values. These opposite examples should help the *Cosmopolitan* woman to decide which system of values she wants to acquire and follow.

Capricorn January 16 – **You have two very different friends, who connect you to two different social circles.** One is single by choice and has no interest in having children. She's more likely to have a dog! The other is very much into the respectability of marriage or de facto domesticity. Over the next two weeks you will navigate this fork in the road. It's quite an education. [H-327]

Yet another horoscopolical text also presents a friend who should be helpful with the same dilemma. As exemplified by this friend, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is shown two alternatives, whether to be single and truly free or to be married and dependent on her husband.

Capricorn December 26 – **You have a friend or acquaintance (in your tribe, online or offline) who sums up the big dilemma for women everywhere.** Should we be single and free, or shackled up and shackled? This female in your life either loves being married or de facto, and having the prestige and comfort – or she'd rather be out in the woods. Or out on the town. And you? [H-141]

To sum up, family and friends are considered as positive values in the *Cosmopolitan* world. Their presence in the analysed texts is partly dictated by the very nature of the discussed genre. The concepts of both family and friends, however, seem to be incorporated in the horoscopes in such a way as to match the *Cosmopolitan* ideology, in which there is little space for close relationships with other people. The reason for this state of affairs might be the conviction that intimacy and commitment may limit or disturb the beloved, highly desired and widely understood idea of freedom. The corpus reveals that the relationships in which the *Cosmopolitan* woman gets involved appear quite superficial and loose. The pattern reappears very frequently throughout the corpus and within its context so as to make it appear to be a natural, desired and beneficial state of matters.

6.1.6 Volunteer role – serving others as a positive value

Volunteer, volunteering, voluntary role, voluntary life, volunteer zone, voluntary involvement, voluntary commitments, voluntary work, voluntary concern, volunteer position, volunteer sphere, volunteering question, volunteering situation, volunteer issues, voluntary goal, even volunteer heaven – these alone make 81 occurrences altogether. And there are still other names describing the concept in the corpus. We can assume that whatever hides behind this name constitutes a significant part of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's experience.

The volunteer role in its broad sense is often listed together with work, career and university life. It is depicted as one of the female roles by which women may feel fulfilled.

Capricorn December 15 – The lifestyle you deserve is a combination of the best daily routine for you, the liveliest good health and **a role you feel fulfilled by. It may involve work, study or volunteering.** At the moment, the universe is showing you glimpses of what might be, in 2012. Think big and do not think any person, organisation, place or option is beyond you! [H-39]

In the horoscope above, it is stated that the role by which the *Cosmopolitan* woman feels fulfilled may involve work, studying or volunteering. The same thing is also implied in the next example. It shows that the woman may derive satisfaction from her career, academic experience or a non-profit activity.

Cancer December 22 – **The midheaven of your chart is where you strive for career or academic heaven, or volunteer heaven, if you give your time to a non-profit.** It's also where the most unexpected and thrilling changes are unfolding. This is untried territory. But it's also allowing you to think far more broadly and creatively about what 2012 might do for you. And you for it! [H-117]

The horoscope presented below also enumerates a volunteer role together with the *Cosmopolitan* woman's career and her life as a university student. It predicts exciting changes as well.

Scorpio December 23 – It's early days, and you haven't had enough time to absorb the full impact of what could happen – but stay tuned, and stay open. **Your job, your life as a student or your volunteer role could be reinterpreted in such an exciting, new and different way next year.** It feels like there's a wave of change happening around you. There is. Grab the tip; surf. [H-123]

The next example encourages the *Cosmopolitan* woman to introduce fresh and radical ideas in terms of her career, education or volunteer role. It also promises some benefits which may result from such bold decisions.

Scorpio January 6 – **You can either do what everyone else is doing, in terms of your job, university life or volunteer role – or take the leap.** Well, it looks as if you took the leap and now you are seeing just how exciting everything can be, when you experiment. The thing is, anything new or radically different is going to appeal to people who feel just the same as you do. [H-249]

A similar message also comes from the horoscope presented below. It implies that being ambitious and experimental in terms of work, university life or volunteering, is profitable.

Cancer January 6 – **Your little experiment with work, university life or volunteering has paid off, and you can now see why following your instincts and going off the beaten track is a great idea.** What you are doing is original and that is partly why it appeals. The ‘revolution in the head’ planet Uranus is encouraging you to do it your way. But others feel just the same, too. [H-253]

It is interesting to note how in the horoscopolical content the idea of serving other people is juxtaposed with the idea of refusing to serve others (men and children in particular). On the one hand, the volunteer role is part of the woman’s life experience from which she may gain satisfaction and self-fulfillment; on the other hand, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is advised not to sacrifice her individuality, and freedom, and not to become involved in close relationships.

6.1.7 Revolution and change as positive values

The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes encourage the introduction of changes in different fields of life. Some horoscopolical messages advise making sensible decisions, when preceded by a reasonable consideration of the circumstances, one’s own aims and desires, possible consequences or an analysis of other people’s experiences. Usually, there are two paths that the *Cosmopolitan* woman may take. Let us see some examples:

Taurus December 17 – **You have some thinking to do,** about your partner, former partner or potential partner. There may also be a rival, opponent or enemy in the works. Basically, **tis the season to think about how much of a free spirit you want to be. Your awareness of the pros and cons of a commitment looks very high.** Security is on offer but what about independence? [H-71]

The above-mentioned horoscope implies that the *Cosmopolitan* woman should think through the pros and cons of the choice she is going to make. She has to be aware of the possible consequences. The same advice comes from the next horoscope. The message is that the woman should make observations so that she can draw conclusions for herself.

Capricorn January 16 – You have two very different friends, who connect you to two different social circles. One is single by choice and has no interest in having children. She’s more likely to have a dog! The other is very much into the respectability of marriage or de facto domesticity. Over the next two weeks **you will navigate this fork in the road. It’s quite an education.** [H-327]

Every change, no matter whether more or less radical, has implications. It sounds sensible to evaluate the circumstances, conditions and possible repercussions. Still, the

impression might also be that focusing on possible consequences diminishes belief in the validity of the change itself.

Other horoscopes encourage revolutionary steps to challenge authority and to attempt what is allegedly impossible.

Pisces December 23 – Is this about your values? (What you will, and won't, sell out for – and what you consider priceless...) If not, then it's certainly about your money, house, business, possessions or flat. And this is a story which just keeps building in your horoscope, day by day. **Look to the people who challenged their fathers, or the 'authorities'.** What are you learning? [H-120]

The horoscope above implies that the *Cosmopolitan* woman should learn from those people who were brave enough to challenge their fathers and authority.

Another horoscope, on the other hand, states that the woman should resist someone or something that has a negative impact on her life.

Leo December 29 – **Anybody or anything which takes over your time, or even your health, has to be challenged.** You are now being shown, so clearly, about the real impact of particular people or organisations on the way you live your life. This is about the hours, the daily routine and how you feel and look physically. **Whatever or whomever dominated must be faced, now.** [H-180]

Another horoscope gives advice to experiment and explore. It also shows that revolution and freedom are highly desirable, positive values.

Libra February 10 – Sweet freedom. You can now be an independent agent, at least in the context of your former, current or potential partner. And even an enemy or rival. **You're being shown how different life could be, if you were willing to experiment and explore.** Venus, your ruling planet, is moving closely in synch with Uranus, **the planet of revolution and freedom.** And nothing less will do. You just saw a possible glimpse of 2013. [H-496]

The last example in this category also encourages a revolution, but in terms of career, university life or a volunteer role. It is similar to the previous horoscopolical message, since it also reminds the great value of freedom.

Scorpio March 5 – **There has to be a revolution** at work, university or with your volunteer role. **Freedom must win the day.** But when and how will it happen? First of all, there is a period of complication, starting today. It's fine, though. It gives you time to think. Then from April 22 it all kicks off. [H-753]

Still other *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes seem to support centuries-old codes and rules, such as the following three:

Scorpio February 24 – Test-tube baby? Why not. Punk rock sex? Why not, again. The only thing is, you are the absolute and final judge of what is acceptable, or quite unacceptable, in your personal life – or where the next generation is concerned. **Are old rules really there to be challenged?** [H-646]

The example horoscope above questions the acceptability of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's attitude and behaviour. It also implies that there are certain principles which should not be challenged.

Aquarius February 24 – All eyes are on the money, the house, the business, the possessions or the flat. That's helpful. It lets you see your world as other people see it. It's also time to choose. **Should everything be challenged and changed? Or is there a limit to what is cool, kosher or okay?** [H-642]

The example horoscope presented below also questions the usefulness and validity of audacious behaviour.

Sagittarius February 24 – The house, flat, family or flatmate situation is attracting reaction, feedback from other people. This helps you see it clearly, even though it's become awfully unclear this month. **Next question – is audacious behaviour useful, or not?** Time to choose, Sagittarius. [H-645]

It can be seen, therefore, that some horoscopical messages more or less explicitly suggest that being radical, daring, audacious, revolutionary, rebellious does not always pay and may well be unnecessary. Again, double-sided messages simultaneously incite revolutionary thinking and action and promise benefits on the one hand, and advise reasonable self-restraint and threaten possible disappointment or else severe after-effects, on the other. Viewing revolution and change – apparently positive values – in such a fail-safe way may make the concepts (and the people acting them out) appear indirectly monitored and controllable. The horoscopes seem to convey the message that revolution and change is good until it is exercised, albeit moderately. After all, people who behave in a predictable manner can be controlled more easily.

6.1.8 Travel as a positive value

Travel broadens the mind. By definition, it is also inscribed in the concept of being cosmopolitan. Not surprisingly, it appears in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes on a regular basis. The *Cosmopolitan* woman is a citizen of the world, she is not afraid of experiencing other cultures, visiting different nations, exploring the foreign. Let us investigate a few examples:

Leo December 20 – **The world of publishing, academia, travel or foreign connections offers you zoom-zoom potential** as the universe throws you a surprise and you suddenly see why 2012 could be so exciting. This was never on your radar but maybe it should have been, all along! Also coming your way, stunning opportunities for success, within five days of this forecast. [H-104]

The example above clearly implies that travel and foreign connections are beneficial and hide potential to be explored. The next horoscope, on the other hand, points out how enriching it may be to discover people who are truly cosmopolitan, and who have amazing travel experiences and an open-minded, cosmopolitan worldview. They may certainly set a good example for the *Cosmopolitan* woman.

Cancer January 3 – The Moon, your ruler, joins Jupiter, the planet of opportunity and improvement, in the most sociable sector of your horoscope now. **This is where you derive greater meaning from a friendship or group, but also discover new people who bring their travel experiences or amazing world view to your life.** It's a great time to join a club, team or society. [H-217]

Travel is also the main subject in the next example. Although the horoscope implies that this is just the beginning, it creates a very optimistic vision of what is yet to come. Travel is also associated with publishing and educational opportunities.

Virgo March 13 – **This is just the start of the travel, publishing or educational opportunities. But what a start – grab it and go.** And sometimes, remember travel is all in the mind. It's the European, Asian or American background which counts, for some. [H-851]

Another horoscope is somewhat different. It concerns the need to keep up appearances as a woman of the world. It, then, indicates that what really matters is genuine communication, and being read or heard.

Taurus January 9 – This Full Moon is about **the need to keep up appearances as a traveller, student, writer, teacher, publisher – or woman of the world, dealing with other nationalities.** Forget appearances, though. What really matters is

the conversation, letter or e-mail near Friday. And most of all, an unusual chance to be read or heard – and genuinely connect. [H-279]

The horoscope below, on the other hand, envisages that the *Cosmopolitan* woman will be very successful in terms of travelling, writing, studying or teaching.

Libra January 13 – **You will be travelling, studying, writing, teaching or publishing at the biggest and best level for years, soon.** Count forward to June in your mind, and see what is being set up for you now. Nothing and nobody is random in astrology, and some of the green lights you have seen in late 2011 are now urging you forward. Just keep going, Libra. [H-310]

The last example reveals that travel and foreign cultures are enriching in the sense that the *Cosmopolitan* woman can learn about the world and people, and the places and situations which she may encounter in her life. The experience of travel and foreign cultures teaches her how to be more realistic, but it also inspires her to reach for the better and brighter future.

Libra January 19 – **The world of foreign cultures, travel, online publishing, books, university life or education is challenging you.** First of all, **it is challenging you to be a total realist about particular people, places or unavoidable situations!** Secondly, **it is challenging you to believe in a bigger, better, brighter future.** And you know what? within four months it's on the way. [H-342]

Travel, then, brings opportunities, and is viewed as an exciting and enriching experience. The *Cosmopolitan* woman may experience the foreign herself or may benefit from other people's travels and explorations. Travel opens the mind to diversity, lets the woman feel a citizen of the world, and hides amazing potential.

Interestingly, in the context of travel (as well as studying, teaching, publishing, writing, moving that frequently go together with it), the dilemma of being free and independent with no guarantees, or of being chained but secure, reappears from time to time.

The horoscope below, for example, quite clearly states that the *Cosmopolitan* woman has to choose between two alternatives. If she decides to follow the path of travelling, studying, publishing, teaching, writing or moving, she will be all alone. However, she will gain freedom. If she chooses 'belonging,' she may feel safe but constricted.

Pisces January 16 – **You can't have it all when it comes to travel, study, publishing, teaching, writing or moving.** You can't have it all when you're dealing with other cultures either. There is a clear fork in the road. **One path you travel alone, but with nobody confining you or co-opting you. The other is very much about belonging, fitting in and feeling safe.** And yet...! [H-326]

The next horoscope is very similar. It presents the same two alternatives in terms of the world of travel, foreign cultures, publishing and education. The *Cosmopolitan* woman again has to choose between being free and alone, and being chained but secure and cosy.

Pisces December 26 – **The world of travel, different nationalities, publishing or education whirls around your head. And only you can decide if you would rather be free, and out on your own – or cosy and secure.** Of course, one woman's 'cosiness' is another woman's ball and chain. But then again, when you are your own person, there is absolutely no guarantee of security! [H-140]

The horoscope quoted below also implies the same idea in the context of travelling, writing and education, i.e. the choice between independence and freedom on the one hand, and security and comfort on the other.

Pisces February 13 – **The asteroid Diana is showing you how thrilling freedom can be, in the context of travelling, moving, studying, writing, publishing or teaching. You will lose guarantees or security but gain sweet independence.** Yes or no? There's another horoscope story today too. It kicks off this evening, and it will help you take stock of work, university life or a volunteer role. Is your best coping mechanism still right for you? [H-516]

Yet again, then, freedom and independence are described as something desired but risky, whereas negatively-valued 'belonging' is supposed to guarantee comfort and safety. The interpretation that first suggests itself is that as a citizen of the world, the *Cosmopolitan* woman would prefer to explore freely its diversity in order to increase her knowledge and develop as a person, as well as to seek opportunities elsewhere rather than to be bound to one place or community where the opportunities might be limited.

The phrase *woman of the world* appears nine times in the corpus, always together with the concept of a traveller or experiencing the foreign. There is also one occurrence of the expression describing the woman as a *global citizen*. Moreover, next to these, there are usually other concepts cited simultaneously, namely: writing, studying, publishing, teaching, moving or reading. Arranging them together suggests a close link connecting them. It seems obvious that one of the common denominators is the idea of increasing knowledge and gathering enriching experiences as well as sharing them. All of the concepts concur to create the image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman as someone open to novelties and innovations, eager to learn, develop her skills, draw inspiration from other cultures, someone aware of and tolerant towards cultural differences, who respects diversity in appearance, customs, beliefs, age, race, sexual orientation or life style.

And yet, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology mostly promotes the image of a slim, white and beautiful woman – the standard that is observed immediately with only one glance at the *Cosmopolitan* magazine cover. The majority of women who decorate the *Cosmopolitan* covers are “light-skinned, heterosexual, smooth-haired, perfect-bodied women” as Maldonado (2013) reports after the investigation of 132 covers over the span of several years (2001-2012).

It seems an ideal situation for the myth to be effective. Yet again, some seemingly unrelated ideas are actually conveying two opposite ideas, i.e. the *Cosmopolitan* woman must be open to diversity, yet she is supposed to stick to the most appreciated standard image. Both concepts keep appearing repeatedly. Therefore, both have been naturalized. Even the simultaneous occurrence of them within a given context does not tend to be received as a contradiction in any way.

6.2 Beauty myth and stereotypes

The myth both makes use of gender stereotypes and reinforces them. The selected stereotypes, considered to be the most striking which reappear in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, concern women as financially dependent on men, as emotional, as focused on their overall image, as following their instincts, or as being hesitant and indecisive. The stereotype that women are essentially family-and-home-matters-oriented may be judged on the basis of its very frequent occurrence throughout the corpus, but this also overlaps with the typically horoscopical content as such.

At first sight, at the level of language, when juxtaposed with modern philosophy of life, stereotypical views seem to be immediately and unequivocally rejected and negatively valued. This juxtaposition, however, paradoxically contributes to exposing gender stereotypes and possibly reinforcing them.

Single horoscopes are representatives of the whole discourse. Since the content reoccurs from time to time, the meaning which it carries repeatedly, gradually shapes and sustains the conviction that the message is true. This simple process of naturalisation, that is making a particular matter seem a natural and inevitable state of being by repeatedly alleging it to be true, either between the lines at one time or more explicitly at another, is exactly the mechanism the myth harnesses.

Let us examine a few selected horoscopes:

Taurus January 16 – Your former, current or potential partner is at the heart of big questions. You have to be honest and say there are two kinds of Taurus women. **One kind would rather commit to a man because of the status and comfort – not to mention the property or lifestyle gains. Another kind has totally different values and loves her freedom, wildness and oxygen.** [H-335]

Aries January 16 – In a couple of weeks you won't have the push-pull feeling about money, houses, businesses or flats (or precious items). **At the moment there's a clear option to have comfort, security and prestige – but at a cost to freedom and independence. Meanwhile there's bags of space and autonomy on offer but no guarantees!** The dilemma ends by February. [H-336]

The two texts above clearly indicate men's superiority over women in terms of status, money and prestige. On the other hand, it is suggested that this is strictly connected with broadly understood comfort and security. Another stereotypical image that emerges here is the one of a hesitant woman who, though treasuring and heading for independence, is not able to achieve alone what is allegedly guaranteed by dependence on men. This is a great paradox in the context of the *Cosmopolitan* ideology.

Another stereotypical image of women is that they are driven by emotions rather than logic and reason. Emotions pose an obstacle to being practical, realistic or reasonable. This is why horoscopes always suggest leaving them behind and planning sensibly.

The horoscope cited below, for example, suggests that the *Cosmopolitan* woman should be practical, and that she should tame her emotions.

Gemini January 29 – **Emotions can be left out of it, and actually that's the best thing.** This is a question about the money, the house, the possessions, the business or the flat. The powerful asteroid Hygeia, who helps you prevent problems before they happen, and solidly protect you, is on your side. She's in the totally practical sign of Capricorn. **So just be practical.** Finis! [H-394]

Another example also advises the *Cosmopolitan* woman not to be over-emotional, but rather to tackle the physical reactions of her body and create a sensible plan which will help her to deal with a difficult and stressful situation.

Pisces February 4 – **Park the emotion at the door. Park the physical response, too, which may range from a faster-beating heart to a slight sheen of sweat (even though it is cold).** This man or woman who affects you so much is triggering the dinosaur part of your brain. Best thing to do? No matter if this is raging passion or serious enmity, **the idea is to sketch out a time-frame and a plan.** Give yourself until July. It's a plan, Stan. [H-434]

The message in the next horoscope is similar. The *Cosmopolitan* woman is advised to give some thought to a certain issue, and to plan clever solutions, without unnecessary emotions.

Scorpio February 23 – A friend – or group – should not become the source of conflict this year. Of course, the current atmosphere does not help. But you do not have to buy into what is going on. **Clearly, a plan is required. But with enough thought, it can be a smart one. Without emotional heat.** [H-634]

Interestingly enough, the emotional is often mentioned next to the sexual zone in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. The issues of intimate relationships or parenthood may bring confusion or an emotional impasse that requires taking control to regain proper balance.

The two horoscopes quoted below reveal a close connection between emotions and sexuality. The first horoscope implies that the questions linked to sexuality may have led to emotional tension, whereas the other one seems to equate the emotional with the sexual zone.

Libra February 20 – **Time for some emotional recovery and a little normality. It's been years since you've been able to look at questions about sex, lovers, parenthood (or decisions not to parent) and so on – without confusion.** By extension, this involves issues around other people's kids, contraception, suitable fathers – everything! Today lets you feel all the necessary feelings. At last. [H-599]

Leo February 13 – **After years of drifting and floating (at least emotionally or sexually) you are now being gently taken back to dry land.** One of the first signs this is happening, is the conversation, e-mail or card which is on the way by Wednesday. It may be hinted at tonight. There is also a lingering question about the house, flat, share household or family. Total space and freedom can be inspiring but it costs, in terms of security. [H-522]

Women are also viewed as following their instincts and intuition. Intuition rarely misleads them. On the contrary, it usually seems to be right. In opposition to the above mentioned horoscopolical advice to be logical and to plan sensible strategies based on reason, within the same content *Cosmopolitan* women are encouraged to act intuitively. This can be observed in the following horoscopes which imply that instincts and intuition can be relied on:

Cancer January 6 – Your little experiment with work, university life or volunteering has paid off, and **you can now see why following your instincts and going off the beaten track is a great idea.** What you are doing is original and that is partly why it appeals. The 'revolution in the head' planet Uranus is encouraging you to do it your way. But others feel just the same, too. [H-253]

Gemini January 6 – Well, you weren't expecting this! But the excitement about such a new way of handling your social life, friendships or group involvements is growing. **Your instincts were right.** The more you open up to the mood around you (the zeitgeist) and tune in, the better the results. You are reading people the right way. And they want change too. Good! [H-254]

Libra January 6 – **Your intuition was telling you to go for it,** in terms of your former, current or potential partner. Or even someone against you. **Your intuition was right.** And there's more excitement where that came from! Over the next year or so, you will be using your new-found confidence in your own radical attempts, to try even more options. It's just so liberating. [H-250]

Scorpio January 27 – You should enjoy the path from late January to early February, as the asteroid Diana moves through Scorpio, your own sign. She symbolises freedom without any compromise, and although this has been such an issue for you lately (with a struggle, no doubt) you are now in the clear. **You can act as the mood takes you and follow your instincts.** [H-377]

Cosmopolitan women are supposed to be aware of their individuality, power and the possibilities that freedom gives them. With the sense of personal dignity, high self-esteem and strong personal identity, they have every right to make their own decisions about themselves. Yet *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes often mention the issues of appearance, image and reputation, which indicates that it is those things which significantly shape the woman's reality and self-perception. Women are, therefore, expected to take charge of their broadly understood profile, which should not, however, escape a particular established set of rules. The *Cosmopolitan* woman's self-image appears to be strongly related to the fact that others constantly watch her, and to what those others allegedly see. This may also suggest the woman's over-concern with her body and preoccupation with her self as stereotypically female characteristics. The matter is, however, more widely discussed in the following sections.

Lastly, it appears that, when compared to Halpern's (2000: 238) gender labels in terms of traits and role behaviours, the content of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes reflects to a large extent the scholar's results. Even though women are theoretically encouraged to be independent, they are still considered as significantly dependent on men, especially as financial providers who guarantee comfort, security and prestige. Women's warmth and empathy may manifest themselves in helping others gratuitously (volunteer role in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes). Furthermore, women are assumed to be considerably more emotional, which is also reflected in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. Women's competitiveness is hardly visible in the horoscopes, unless it concerns comparing oneself to other women and struggling to meet social expectations. Taking initiative with opposite sex also seems limited. Home and family matters are frequent in the horoscopes, which agrees with the

stereotypically female role as someone who takes care of hearth and home. Taking care of children may also be assumed to be reflected in the frequency of occurrence of the concept in the corpus, even though the *Cosmopolitan* woman's role as a mother is hardly ever explicitly stated.

In conclusion, single examples of gender stereotypes in horoscopes, reoccurring on a regular basis, represent the whole discourse of the beauty myth and, therefore, shape and reinforce the beauty myth itself. The most apparent stereotypes that are evoked and reinforced within the discourse of the beauty myth concern women as inferior to men in terms of financial, status or power matters, women being impetuous, emotional and hesitant, experiencing dilemmas, concerned with how they are perceived in the eyes of others.

Even though the *Cosmopolitan* ideology means and claims to promote completely different images of women, gender stereotypes are still present in its content, for the *Cosmopolitan* ideology is essentially part of the discourse of the beauty myth.

6.3 Beauty myth and the body

The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes speak of the female body. By their generic nature, horoscopes raise the issue of the body – physical health, emotional and psychological dilemmas as well as appearance. Even though body seems to constitute the core for the beauty myth construction, the construction itself and its scope go significantly beyond bodily matters as such. The contractual term *beauty myth* may evoke an immediate association with the body. Nonetheless, although the issues selected for this subchapter are strictly connected with the body, it must be once again explicitly stated that, in compliance with Wolf's (1991) theory, there is much more to the beauty myth than body-oriented issues.

The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes mention the following issues connected with the body: appearance, sexuality and reputation, emotional state, diet and fitness as well as health in general. In a sense, public profile may also fall into this category as it is often mentioned together with these above. However, public profile is a broader issue and will be further discussed in the following subchapter on identity.

The fact that the above-mentioned issues are cited in particular settings may indicate their interrelation. The woman's image, or her outer package so to speak, is often listed next to her reputation or else public profile. Therefore, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is made to believe that, first of all, her looks, her body and the way she behaves is of particular importance. Secondly, she is being convinced that she is permanently subject to other people

watching her and to their judgement. Thirdly, she is made to believe that she has to fit the prescribed standard in order not to be rejected or criticised. Eventually, these convictions are what the *Cosmopolitan* woman, at least partly, builds up her sense of female identity on.

The *Cosmopolitan* woman is made to believe that the way she looks and the way she behaves matter, since this is her advertising. The way she presents herself in the eyes of other people either guarantees success or risks failure. Reputation has to be cared for. Reputation in the sense of general opinion that other people hold about the *Cosmopolitan* woman's image and her behaviour, or else how much or how little respect, admiration, acceptance or approval she receives, based on previous and current image or behaviour. Furthermore, there is always something that could be or should be improved in this regard. Consider the following horoscopes:

Aquarius December 16 – Rather like a gas leak getting under a door, you have been surrounded by particular people over the past few years, who slip into situations which affect **the way you are seen, or the way you look. Because this is about your public profile, reputation or appearance (and this is your 'advertising') make sure the gas leaks stop.** No more confusion. [H-49]

The horoscope quoted above implies that both the way the *Cosmopolitan* woman looks and the way she is seen are crucial. She is supposed to create an image of herself which will advertise her well. In this example, she has to overcome the situation in which other people negatively affect her image.

The message of the example below is very similar. It clearly states that the entire assumption which people make about the *Cosmopolitan* woman is essential. It is viewed as the key or the ticket to success.

Taurus February 26 – **Your name or appearance – maybe the entire assumption people make about you – is the key to everything now. It's your ticket.** But you also need to have the occasional booster and the Moon in Taurus after today should give you a reason to try that much harder. [H-676]

The next horoscopolical message, on the other hand, is that the *Cosmopolitan* woman should improve the present situation in terms of her image, appearance or reputation.

Virgo March 7 – **Matters relating to your image, appearance or reputation have been crying out for an action plan.** Nothing has been possible (nor will it be, for another four weeks). From there, you will accelerate. At the moment, use this time to jot some of your more brilliant solutions down. [H-779]

Another horoscope shows two ways of dealing with the problematic issue of reputation and appearance. The *Cosmopolitan* woman may either take some radical action or manifest complete denial.

Libra February 18 – **One way of dealing with the deep concern you always have about your reputation or appearance, is to take drastic measures.** Maybe you've already done this, but today is the perfect time to ask yourself if your solution is actually worth all the time, effort (or even money) you have put into it. **Another way of dealing with it is total denial.** Somewhere in between all that, though, there really is a way through, then out. [H-575]

Yet another message that the myth tries to implant through this discourse is the need for comparison with other women and the need to be better, as if in some kind of rivalry or competition. See the following example:

Libra December 19 – Saturn in Libra has taught you (the long, tricky way!) about all aspects of your appearance, presentation, online profile, promotion or even publicity over the last 18 months. You've now mastered quite a lot that eludes other women, even though you may feel you still have L plates on. Right now there's another mini-lesson to take on board. [H-90]

Sexuality is yet another issue connected with the body that essentially contributes to identity construction. In the beauty myth, sexuality is used in the same fashion as appearance and in inseparable relation to each other. According to the beauty myth, physical attractiveness correlates to female fertility and men are more likely to battle for beautiful women. In the system that the beauty myth intends to believe in, a beautiful image not only guarantees reproductive success but also success in life in general.

Modern *Cosmopolitan* women are supposed to be aware of their female sexuality, to freely experience it and express their femininity. The content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes actually reflects the fact that female sexuality constitutes one of the most important dimensions of her life. In the horoscopes, the frequently occurring issues/terms connected with sexuality include: intimacy, sex, sexual partners, lovers, sexual relationships, sex life, sexual/erotic possibilities, contraception, pregnancy and parenthood (or the world of babies, children, teenagers, or a role with children), step-mother status and dad-dating. Some of them are often mentioned as general issues which may need consideration on the part of the *Cosmopolitan* woman. In the context of sexuality, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is noticeably warned against motherhood and the consequences it may entail for her personal life, with particular focus on her freedom. Still, some horoscopes suggest that the world of children may also have much to offer for the *Cosmopolitan* woman's experience. However, the decision

concerning parenthood must be hers and must be informed, by no means hasty. Similarly, having intimate relationships with men who already have children and thereby receiving the status of stepmother is advised to be thought over and approached with care in the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. Here are some selected examples that may fall into the sexuality category:

Aquarius December 15 – Nothing is a coincidence or an accident in astrology, so you can relax in the knowledge that all those twists of fate involving babies, kids or teenagers lately, are meant to be there. They will take you to a bigger, better emotional life in 2012. It's also possible that sex is becoming more important to you. You'll gain your PhD in it, by late 2012. [H-38]

The horoscope above refers to the issue of babies and children, and also to the issue of sex and its importance in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life.

In the example below, on the other hand, the questions of sex, pregnancy, contraception and children are raised. The text implies that they were difficult for the woman and that solving this problem will bring relief.

Cancer January 27 – This should come as a relief. Questions about sex, pregnancy or contraception which were so difficult have almost gone. And any concern you had about a child or baby in your world (not your own) or the subject of the next generation, en masse, has gone. What's ahead for February? Enough emotional space to do your own thing. And be yourself. [H-381]

Yet another horoscope concerns unexpected pregnancy and warns the woman against taking risks if she does not intend to have a baby.

Capricorn March 13 – In astrology, the Fifth House of your chart rules unexpected pregnancy, so if you don't want it, don't take risks! If you ever wanted to found a dynasty for the future, though, the right lover could be just around the corner. [H-847]

The horoscopolical text which follows also refers to female sexuality and the question of motherhood in the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life. Whether to be or not to be a mother is a big dilemma for her.

Gemini December 19 – The world of babies, children and junior teens has been your big teacher since 2010. And you've come a very long way. By extension this includes sex, because this is where you must decide if you want to be a mama or not. (Or he does!) Now, you realise you have to learn on the run, yet again. But that's fine. Just ask wise people who've been there. [H-94]

Another example touches the same issue, i.e. the issue of children and parenthood, but it presents it as an amazing experience, an experience which is inspiring and full of potential.

Sagittarius December 20 – The world of babies, children or teens could turn your life around, in amazing new directions, as if it had all just been put through a glittering revolving door of change. 2012 could be so full of potential for you. If the next generation is not calling you, then a relationship certainly is. This could result in parenthood one day, or stepmum status! [H-100]

The last example horoscope in this category seems to remind the *Cosmopolitan* woman that she should approach the question of her motherhood with proper care and prudence.

Gemini March 9 – After October, you will no longer have to care so much about the impact you are having on the next generation. Will you be a parent or not? What about other peoples' kids? What if you want to avoid motherhood? Don't let the current Moon mood trigger a hasty decision. [H-806]

Horoscopes often mention the emotional state of the body (or of mind). Emotions are stereotypically a female domain – not surprisingly do they find their place in the discourse of the beauty myth. In the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes the emotional zone is often listed together with personal and sexual life. These three dimensions of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's reality are connected to one another and the *Cosmopolitan* woman should allegedly feel free to experience and express them according to her wish. The *wish* is, however, intruded by *Cosmopolitan* standards on the one hand, while the taking of control is advised on the other. The control over emotions will manifest itself in attempts to overcome them and act in a commonsensical way – stereotypically male. The *Cosmopolitan* woman allegedly makes her own decisions concerning her personal life; still, the decisions will be taken with consideration of the consequences they may entail for her overall profile and reputation. Sexually, the *Cosmopolitan* woman is allegedly liberated; yet she still seems to be experiencing dilemmas concerning involvement in intimate relationships and having children, and is advised to consider them both in terms of benefits and sacrifices.

Next, the horoscopolical house of health. Surprisingly, in comparison to the already mentioned body-oriented issues, the matter of health as a general condition of the body appears in the corpus of horoscopes relatively rarely, as do diet (6 occurrences of the word *diet*) and fitness (9 occurrences of the word *fitness*). Health is often cited next to the issues of work, university life, a volunteer role, lifestyle or daily routine, and is sometimes mentioned

as a factor preventing the *Cosmopolitan* woman from functioning normally or working. Please see the following horoscopes:

Capricorn February 2 – **The Sixth House of your horoscope rules your health, job, fitness, university course or volunteer role.** It's about all the hours in your day and the way you work them. Something epic is happening. You can see a way through and forward. It's promised and not actual. But what is very real, is the promise that a repetitive situation will stop in 2012. [H-411]

The horoscope above refers to health and fitness in the context of work, university life and volunteering. This may imply that all these issues are connected. However, the message is very vague. It does not specify the problem, which may allow a variety of interpretations and adaptations.

The next example, on the other hand, shows the relation between the *Cosmopolitan* woman's physical condition and her efficiency at work, at university or in her volunteer activity. She is advised to care for her health and to distribute and manage her energy sensibly.

Aries January 6 – Stay cool, calm and collected about work, university or volunteer work concerns. And **this applies to any health issue preventing you from working.** The idea is to use the energy blast you are receiving, wisely and effectively. If you just allow the energy to 'run' you then the emotions may be too high. It may help to have a strategy, military style. [H-256]

The next horoscope also puts the issue of health in the context of work, university life and volunteer commitment. Yet again health is presented as a factor which may prevent the woman from functioning normally.

Virgo January 23 – This is a great week for identifying what needs to change with work, university life or your volunteer commitment. Or **maybe your health prevents you from functioning normally?** The New Moon near breakfast should help illuminate the situation. Then you will be ready to talk, sign or just do some research over the weekend. Time for a change. [H-367]

Finally, the word *body* itself appears 11 times in the whole corpus. Apart from one usage – in the phrase *heavenly body* – which does not fall into the category discussed here, four concern the body in terms of treating it, its condition and health and the other six mention the body in the context of its appearance.

To sum up, even though the idea of the beauty myth may evoke an immediate (and absolutely correct) association with the body, the issue has much further scope and crucially

concerns a range of behaviours for which body may or may not be essentially core. True, appearance, which the *Cosmopolitan* woman has to take care of, sounds as if it concerns the body. True, the sexuality of the *Cosmopolitan* woman sounds as if it refers to the body. True again, health, diet and a fitness regimen sound like issues which the *Cosmopolitan* woman should consider in her bodily treatment, and emotions sound like the *Cosmopolitan* woman's typically female bodily reaction to everyday experience. The body, indeed, is a common denominator here, but it is also essentially nothing more than a distractor. What really matters is the actual behaviour of the *Cosmopolitan* woman (or a woman aspiring to this status). The *Cosmopolitan* ideology promotes particular standards as far as the body is concerned, but most importantly it establishes, endorses and forces a set of behaviours which are, ultimately, realisations of the beauty myth. The *Cosmopolitan* woman seems daily to go through the same ritual procedures with an extensive focus on the body and overall image that shows to some extent the beauty myth's intention and contribution.

6.4 Beauty myth and identity

Identity is a complex matter and is essential in the context of the following dissertation. There are two perspectives from which the issue of identity may be approached from. According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 3-4), one assumes "a real you" hiding underneath what is visible as opposed to "a public identity display" which may or may not correspond with it. The exterior image or performance may or may not match the interior reality, the real identity, the real self.

The first approach assumes that even though people happen to present themselves in multiple ways in various contexts, there hides a very intimate, private, relatively stable and pre-discursive identity underneath this appearance, this image they portray. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 3) define it as "an 'essential', cognitive, socialised, phenomenological or psychic phenomenon that governs human action." This approach tries to explain what identities people actually possess, how people may be categorised or distinguished from one another, and their correlation with various sociological measures.

The other approach to identity is constructionist and, as Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 4) claim, it defines identity as "a public phenomenon, a performance or construction that is interpreted by other people. This construction takes place in discourse and other social and embodied conduct, such as how we move, where we are, what we wear, how we talk and so on."

There has been, then, a radical change in understanding the notion of identity. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 4) maintain that “crucially, identity has been *relocated* from the ‘private’ realms of cognition and experience, to the ‘public’ realms of discourse and other semiotic systems of meaning-making.” The essentially social constructionist approach assumes that identity is no longer only reflected in discourse, but rather constituted in discourse in an active, dynamic and unceasing fashion. According to this approach, there is no absolute self that lurks behind discourse. The approach investigates people’s personal comprehension of identity and the way the notion of inner and outer selves is used rhetorically in order to accomplish various social actions. Discourse is, obviously, not all there is in the world. However, people comprehend who they are to themselves and to each other in relation to this very public and accountable realm. The idea behind constructionist approaches is not to replace an inner self with an outer one but assume an idea of an inner self and its external expressions. As Benwell and Stokoe maintain, identity in a broad sense, i.e. who people are to each other, “is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse” (: 4).

According to the assumptions in this dissertation, the beauty myth operates in discourse and, by extension, contributes in the construction of identity. In the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, the notion of identity also finds its place. It seems that a specific kind of female identity – the identity of a *Cosmopolitan* woman – is being constructed in the hereby discussed discourse of the beauty myth, as represented within the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

Clearly, the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s identity is being constructed in constant and ineluctable relation to what comes from the outside. This agrees with Wolf’s (1991) perspective. First of all, the content of horoscopes provides a particular image of the world, which is itself already a manifestation of discursive constructionism. The *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes (and obviously the whole multiplicity of *Cosmopolitan* texts and images, the whole *Cosmopolitan* discourse) provide a particular picture of the world and femaleness for their readers. This is precisely the ideology that comes from the outside in the first place. But the very content of horoscopes also reflects how the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s identity is negotiated and accomplished in relation to what comes from the outside, i.e. other people.

Cosmopolitan horoscopes focus a lot on the notion of *identity* which seems to lurk behind various more or less synonymous expressions, such as *name*, *public* (or *online*) *profile*, *public image*, *reputation* (also *online reputation*), *publicity*, ‘*Me*’ *packaging*, *general me-ness* or *outer package*. These are very often listed next to words such as *appearance*, *look*, *body*,

face, hair or clothes, which reveals their essential connection. Here are some horoscopes to prove it:

Sagittarius December 13 – You probably feel as if you followed a trail that led nowhere, in terms of **your appearance, identity, profile, reputation, name or ‘Me’ packaging**. That is correct. You did. But the trail will appear again, leading you in a new direction. Or you may decide to take another path, as the old life directions no longer work! By January it’s all in the bag. [H-28]

In the horoscope above, the concepts of appearance, identity, profile, reputation, name and ‘Me’ packaging are listed together. They seem to be closely related. Furthermore, the repetition of synonymous ideas may allow the exposition of the general concept and its significance in the *Cosmopolitan* woman’s life.

The next example enhances the conviction that other people observe and assess the *Cosmopolitan* woman, and that the way people see her is important. The text also implies that those people’s judgement constitutes a useful point of reference to the woman.

Pisces March 8 – **To see yourself as other people see you, is a huge advantage**. It’s the only way you’re going to attain the required sense of detachment about your reputation or appearance. This will assist you, as you plunge into something which looks like such a divine alternative. [H-786]

The last example here is somewhat different. Please consider the quote below:

Libra March 10 – You will feel liberated and relaxed, on a level you never thought possible, once Saturn leaves Libra in October. You can be yourself, then and leave any concerns about your face, hair, body, reputation behind. Right now, a dream has an answer to help you. Ready? [H-814]

Surprisingly, the latter example horoscope above encourages the reader to be herself without bothering about face, hair, body and reputation. This brings to mind the idea of an inner self and its outer expressions as expected by the general public. Most *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, however, view public image or appearance as an issue of concern.

How, then, does the notion of *Cosmopolitan* identity relate to the beauty myth? Assuming that identity is constructed in the realm of discourse, it is, by extension, constructed in the realm of the beauty myth that functions within that discourse. The message that comes from the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in question is, primarily, that women are subject to constant observation and judgement from the outside. They have, therefore, to take care about their appearance and overall public image. Standards, norms and expectations also come from the outside. Crucially, these concern the women’s performance, the actual behaviour that

accomplishes the myth. Body is an important element in the discourse of the beauty myth, but it essentially serves as an instrument or means that is intended to elicit and direct particular actions.

Identity construction takes place in the discourse of the beauty myth. This allows a firm assumption that the *Cosmopolitan* woman's identity is shaped according to the ideology of the beauty myth which, as already proved, coincides with that of *Cosmopolitan*. It must be remembered, however, that messages carried by the discourse have two levels – a level of language and a level of myth. In the broadest sense stated most simply, the difference comes down to what is declared and promoted, and what is actually intended, respectively.

The discursive construction of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's identity, then, is two-dimensional. At the level of language she is a fun, fearless female, eager to develop in terms of education and career, a lover of freedom and independence who is sexually liberated, who manages her own body and who makes her own life decisions. At the level of myth, on the other hand, within the same discourse the following messages are being simultaneously and continually conveyed: the *Cosmopolitan* woman manages her body and life so that her public image improves all the time and matches established standards (in other words, she exists and acts in order to accomplish expectations and rules coming from the outside); being and acting accordingly creates bigger chances for success for a woman who is constantly subject to observation and judgement. The myth also tries to enforce the conviction that only men guarantee comfort, prestige and security, including financial gains. Moreover, emotions and dilemmas seem to pose a counterpoint to the image of a fun, fearless and confident *Cosmopolitan* woman. The repetitive character of the messages supports the process of naturalisation.

The *Cosmopolitan* woman's identity is as if constructed simultaneously upon two images (*linguistic* and *mythic*). Even though they may at times seem to stand in opposition to each other, they eventually accomplish the same intention. It also has to be remembered that the mythic image is in fact built upon the linguistic, and in a sense they constitute one structure. As Barthes (1991: 130) maintains, thanks to the process of naturalisation, the myth is taken for granted and read as a factual state of being, as a factual system. Therefore, the myth-consumer feels no need to question it; the myth successfully escapes the dilemma of whether it is an obvious lie or a confirmation of truth.

The *Cosmopolitan* identity is constructed on the mythic image in which a particular system of values has been substituted by a system of facts. And so is it read – as a factual system, whereas it is in fact but a semiological one.

In conclusion, the discourse of the beauty myth significantly affects identity construction in contemporary socio-cultural reality. The myth is part of the *Cosmopolitan* ideology and is noticeable in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes as well as in their immediate context. The myth shapes and reinforces the conviction that women have to focus on their appearance and overall public profile in order to accomplish public expectations and standards which are universal, that they are under permanent observation and judgement, that their image determines their success in different realms of life, that there is a need to compare to and, if necessary, compete with other women, that men are superior in terms of status and it is them who guarantee comfort, financial confidence, security and prestige, and, above all, that this state of matters and the system they happen to be part of is natural and inevitable.

None of the above statements is true. Though the system is presented as a system of facts, it is nothing but a belief system determined by politics. The sense of identity constructed upon those false, mythic assumptions puts women in a conceivably no-win position.

6.5 Summary

The investigation of horoscopolical discourse reveals linguistic manifestations of the beauty myth.

As assumed, and as described in Barthes's (1991: 107) concept, myth is a type of speech. But it is a type of speech that has been stolen, saturated with motivation, and only then given back. And so it is in the case of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. The level of language, therefore, is characterised by arbitrariness and absence of motivation, whereas the mythical signification is so no longer, it is by no means arbitrary and it is (even if only partially) motivated.

Values stolen by the myth are returned somewhat different. In the discourse of the beauty myth, they lose their arbitrariness as signs, and acquire a motivated character.

Within the horoscopolical discourse, stereotypes as well are at the service of the beauty myth. Despite declarations of the *Cosmopolitan* ideology, the research sample analysed reveals the presence of gender stereotypes in *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. These count as beneficial also for the fact that they are already naturalised concepts for the myth to base itself on. The myth may at once present them as facts.

References to the issues of female body and female sexuality can be observed throughout the corpus. The messages actually prescribe particular behaviour rather than appearance.

Identity that is built on the images shaped by the *Cosmopolitan* discourse in question cannot remain stable, since it develops an ambivalent nature based on artificially created and false premises. Intentionally, the images are meant to trigger lower self-esteem, the sense of uncertainty and a deeply rooted conviction of constant observation and assessment. All this guarantees success of the beauty myth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Beauty myth in horoscopical discourse

The following chapter intends to summarise the observations made in the preceding research chapters and to enrich the analysis with further explanations of the subject matter.

This summary is somewhat specific because it encapsulates and demonstrates the results of the research by suggesting a model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope which may be considered as a prototypical representative of the horoscopical discourse of the beauty myth. The chapter also presents the author's own interpretation of the mechanism of the beauty myth, which may serve as a specific clarification of her approach.

7.1 A model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope

The present subchapter is an attempt at creating a model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope to constitute a prototype including and summarising what has been observed and concluded so far. The model is intended to manifest the previously discussed generic features in terms of content and form. The content is, therefore, intended as a realisation of the assumptions of horoscope writing whereas the form follows lexical, grammatical and structural patterns.

In compliance with Swales's (1990: 58) claim that "if all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community," the construction of a prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope requires the incorporation of the essential features of the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes in question.

According to Duszak (1998: 233), a prototype makes it possible to capture the identity of a text class that may be to various degrees replicated in particular representatives. A prototype does not provide a list of essential and sufficient conditions for particular texts to be included in a specific category but, as Duszak argues, it constitutes a point of reference that is formally coherent, informational, well-fitted in a situational context, easily interpreted and accepted by the audience and, simultaneously, allows for particular representatives to comply with the generic specificity to a lesser or greater extent, i.e. to be a better or a worse representative of a specific genre (: 37).

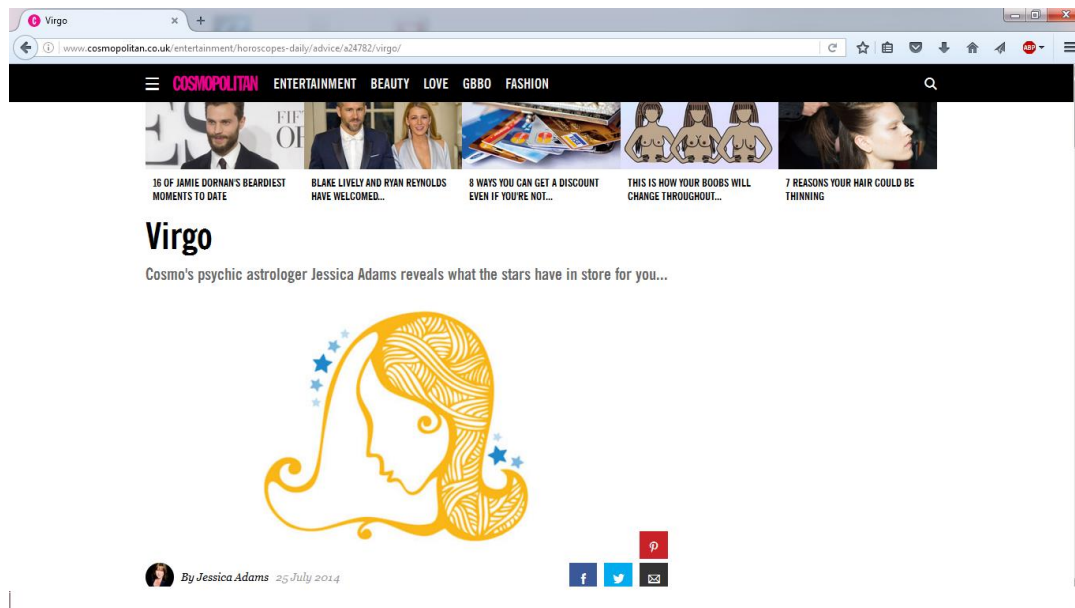
Therefore, a prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope should:

- concern typically horoscopolical issues in terms of content,
- be structured typically for the genre (i.e. as a short passage including 2-6 sentences, preceded by a date and the name of a Zodiac sign),
- use typical register and apply typical grammatical structures,
- manifest density and readability measures typical for the genre (and, therefore, the discourse in question) and suitable for the channel and the discourse community,
- be embedded in a particular context,
- be written in the language of success,
- exhibit the women's language characteristics,

With all the above-mentioned conditions satisfied, it is assumed a prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope will necessarily serve the beauty myth in the ways thoroughly described in the next chapter on the beauty myth in horoscopolical discourse.

It has to be emphasized that the prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope presented below is not an actual quotation of any of the horoscopes subject to the present analyses but is rather artificially created. The immediate context of the prototype is a screenshot (two screenshots, in fact) of the top and the very bottom of the webpage retrieved from the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website [WWW₃₅] on 1st October 2016 in order to resemble an actual context of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

7.1.1 A prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope



Virgo 25 July: Venus in Pisces shows your former, current or potential partner is the biggest issue now. Tensssion? If you choose belonging, you gain comfort, security and prestige, but sacrifice freedom and independence. Your image, reputation, public profile or appearance needs improvement. But the asteroid Diana is now assisting you – the potential is so wonderful and promising... Act!

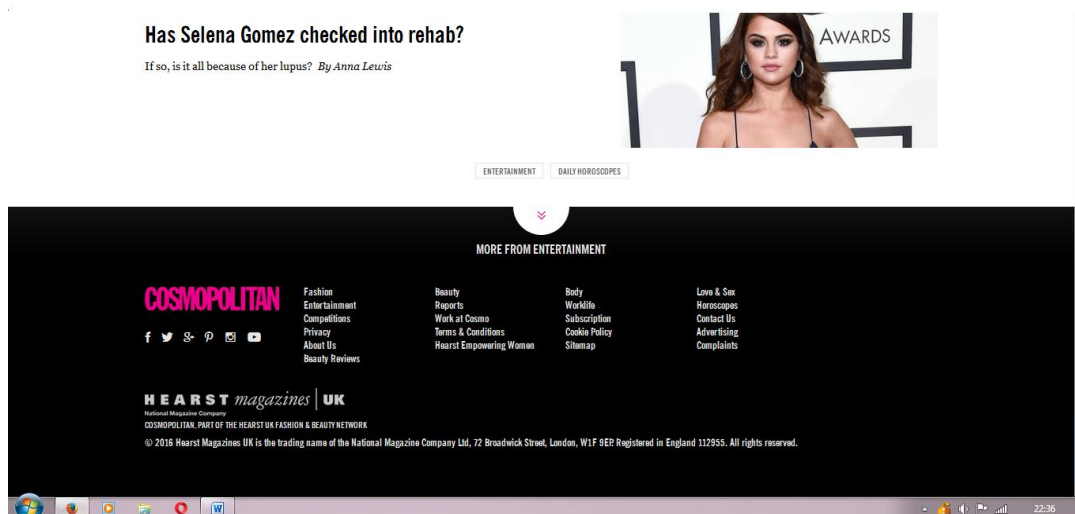


Figure 7 A prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope in an exemplary immediate context

7.1.2 Content

The content of the prototypical horoscope concerns the *Cosmopolitan* woman's personal life. In this case, the issues mentioned are connected with intimate relationships and the woman's dilemma between being independent or dependent on a man as well as the need to improve her public image.

The polyword phrase *your former, current or potential partner* is one of the most frequently occurring in the whole corpus of texts, which is the reason for incorporating it in the model horoscope. The dilemma of choosing between freedom and independence or getting involved in a relationship offering comfort, financial gains, security and prestige keeps reappearing throughout the corpus and is strictly connected with the former idea. Another subject mentioned in the model is that of improving the *Cosmopolitan* woman's public image, with a promise of amazing outcomes and benefits. This realises the *Cosmopolitan* idea of the need to take care of the superficial image meant for the public as a kind of woman's advertising in the competition of successful life. With an assurance of the assistance of a heavenly body's powers and a tempting prediction of eclat, the model horoscope ends with an encouragement to take action.

As a later chapter on the beauty myth will explain in greater detail, the above-mentioned ideas constitute a significant foundation for the beauty myth's existence and functioning.

7.1.3 Structural features

As far as structural features are concerned, the model horoscope resembles the form of the analysed *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes. It is preceded by the name of a Zodiac sign and a date. The text is short and concise. It consists of six sentences, two of which are only one-word utterances. The passage is laconic and makes use of overgeneralisations and punctuation marks to express as much as possible within the restricted volume of the horoscope.

7.1.4 Register characteristics

The most important features of register used in the model horoscope concern lexis, grammar, indicators of the use of the language of success as well as of women's language. Its specificity can also be estimated on the basis of readability and density measures.

7.1.4.1 Readability

The model horoscope is composed of 57 words. It consists of six sentences. Two of them are only one-word utterances (*Tensssssion?* and *Act!*). Another two turned out to be so complex that the online tool used for calculating readability [WWW₃₂] suggested rewriting them in order to improve readability. The sentences referred to are *If you choose belonging, you gain comfort, security and prestige, but sacrifice freedom and independence.* and *But the asteroid Diana is now assisting you – the potential is so wonderful and promising.* The programme estimated the Gunning Fog index at 10.82, which allows us to consider the text's ease of readability as average. The result also seems adequate for the media discourse in general as targeted at a wide and diversified audience. The same text analysis tool – online-utility.org [WWW₁₁], estimated the average number of syllables per word at 1.88 and the average number of words per sentence at 9.50, which results are comparable with these relating to the analysis of the whole corpus of texts, i.e. 1.59 for the average number of syllables per word and 12.8 for average sentence length. Furthermore, the programme calculated lexical density of 77.1930 which is a much higher result than that calculated for the whole corpus (12.9%). However, it is necessary to bear in mind, and it must be emphasized, that the disparity is inevitable – the study of an individual text will show results different from the study of a number of texts, even if they are homogeneous. The calculation of lexical density of the model horoscope is typical for written texts.

7.1.4.2 Language of success

The prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope manifests the features of the language of success. This is seen at both lexical and syntactic levels. All of the features can be observed in the prototype.

The feature of immediateness and exceptionality in the model prototype manifests itself through the use of present tenses – Present Simple (*is, choose, gain, needs*) and Present Continuous (*is assisting*), the use of imperative mood in the final sentence (*Act!*), the time expression indicating immediacy (*now* – used twice), and the use of a superlative form (*the biggest*). All this is intended to create a sense of the exceptionality of the present situation which requires an immediate response. The effect is escalated with the promise of achievable success.

The feature of patternisation and logoisation shows in the syntactic constructions which are typical for the genre. Another horoscopical tendency is that personified celestial

bodies recommend, advise, suggest, assist *Cosmopolitan* women – as do *Venus in Pisces* and *the asteroid Diana* in the prototype. Moreover, in order to create the model horoscope, frequently occurring polyword phrases were adopted: *your former, current or potential partner* and *your image, reputation, public profile or appearance*.

The feature of accelerated pulse can also be observed in the prototypical horoscope. The word *Tensssssion?* with a deliberately multiplied letter *s* may create a sense of excitement or restlessness, especially with a question mark at the end. Emotional punctuation also includes exclamation marks and suspension points – both present in the prototype. Another indicator of the feature is the already mentioned superlative form (*biggest*). There is also an example of two adjectives listed together to enhance the impression of uniqueness and optimism (*so wonderful and promising*).

The feature of affinity comes down to an evocation of an impression of familiarity, closeness, trust and friendliness. To achieve this, the distance between the astrologer and the reader must be reduced. In the prototype this is done with the use of the words *you* and *your*. The whole message is stylized to resemble friendly advice given by someone who realises the reader's doubts, dilemmas and emotions, and who wishes to help. Apart from that, no one can understand a woman better than another woman – which may explain the choice of a woman astrologer, and which may actually contribute to the horoscope's persuasiveness. Her image in the photograph, as presented, reminds the reader that the astrologer knows the situation and understands it well for the simple reason that she is a woman and has similar experiences.

The feature of technicisation and professionalisation is also clearly noticeable in the prototypical horoscope. First of all, specific terminology is applied that might be considered as specialised or scientific, i.e. names of Zodiac signs (*Virgo, Pisces*) and celestial bodies (*Venus, the asteroid Diana*). This enhances the credibility and, therefore, the persuasiveness of the horoscope. The prototype also makes use of grammar to serve this feature – there is a conditional sentence *If you choose belonging, you gain comfort, security and prestige, but sacrifice freedom and independence*. Such a linguistic treatment builds the impression of cause and effect.

The language of success is characteristic and inevitable in any discourse that is success-and-happiness-oriented. Such is certainly the discourse of the beauty myth which assists the construction and maintenance of the structures of the consumer society intact.

7.1.4.3 Women's language

There are elements of women's language in the model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope. First of all, there are some trivializing adjectives, such as *wonderful* or *promising*. An intensifier *so* was also incorporated. The statement *Tenssssion?* may be considered as a declarative supposed to be spoken with a rising intonation and indicating lack of certainty rather than simply asking a question.

A sense of affinity and the illusion of a friendly talk is achieved mainly due to the use of the personal pronoun *you* and the possessive adjective *your*. Of course, the subjects mentioned also build the sense of intimacy and trust, since they concern personal the life with which it is alleged that the astrologer is familiar. The whole text resembles advice given by a friend.

The immediate context indicates that the text was written by a woman astrologer, which may contribute to the horoscope's effectiveness in terms of its persuasiveness – after all, women speak the same language.

7.1.5 Context

Although the context to the model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope presented above was adopted from the actual *Cosmopolitan* magazine website, with an access date of 1st October 2016, it is, nevertheless, artificially arranged to fit the prototype and resemble the natural context of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

The context incorporates unchanging elements, such as the main bookmark bar at the top, five different photographs with article headlines immediately below and some other article headlines with photographs underneath, following the same pattern, but with a slightly different configuration, plus a list of the same bookmarks and editorial logos at the bottom of the webpage. The very horoscope is located in the centre, preceded by the large name of a Zodiac sign, a standard note *Cosmo's psychic astrologer Jessica Adams reveals what the stars have in store for you...* and a small photograph of the astrologer. The largest element, however, is a yellow and blue symbol of the Zodiac.

The immediate context indicates the specificity of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and its ideology. It focuses mainly on the issues of beauty, body, fashion, sex, entertainment and the lives of celebrities. The reader realises immediately that the magazine targets young women who aspire to be *Cosmopolitan*, with all the philosophy of life the *Cosmopolitan* ideology offers and promotes.

The horoscopolical text and its context constitute a coherent whole. They complement each other since they are parts of the same discourse – the discourse of the beauty myth. The images and messages support, reinforce and help to maintain the same fundamental myths.

7.1.6 Summary

As Mamet (2005: 251) claims, an analysis of a particular number of already existing authentic texts of a given genre allows intuitive creation of a new and successful version of the type. The attempt made here at constructing a model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope was a consequence of the same reasoning.

The analysed texts are to a great extent repetitive in terms of lexis, grammar and structure, which makes it possible to capture the features and patterns required to create a model *Cosmopolitan* horoscope. This prototype may serve as a point of reference and comparison for particular *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes.

It has been assumed in the present dissertation that *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes constitute a representation of the discourse of the beauty myth. This implies that the content of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes realises the premises of the beauty myth. However, it can be argued that the generic structure of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes also realises the myth to a large extent. This is because the horoscopolical form assumes the use of particular linguistic structures and patterns, many of which are manifestations of the language of success.

7.2 The mechanism of the beauty myth

The application of Puzynina's (1991) theory allows the assumption that *beauty* constitutes a value. Moreover, it is possible to say that *beauty* is a positive value. To use the scholar's definitions, *beauty* is, therefore, *what (people in general, a group of people and) the addresser believes (believe to be good and) acknowledges (acknowledge) to be good*. It is also possible to claim that *beauty is good*, which means that *beauty is what (people in general, a particular group of people and) the addresser wants (want) beauty to be*.

Beauty considered as a value may be assumed to constitute a starting point for the mechanism of the beauty myth. This, in turn, may be illustrated with the use of Barthes's (1991) concept of myth as a type of speech.

Bearing in mind the assumptions above, as a specific summary of the issues discussed in *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6*, the mechanism of the beauty myth as realised by *Cosmopolitan* ideology can be presented graphically as in *Figure 9*:

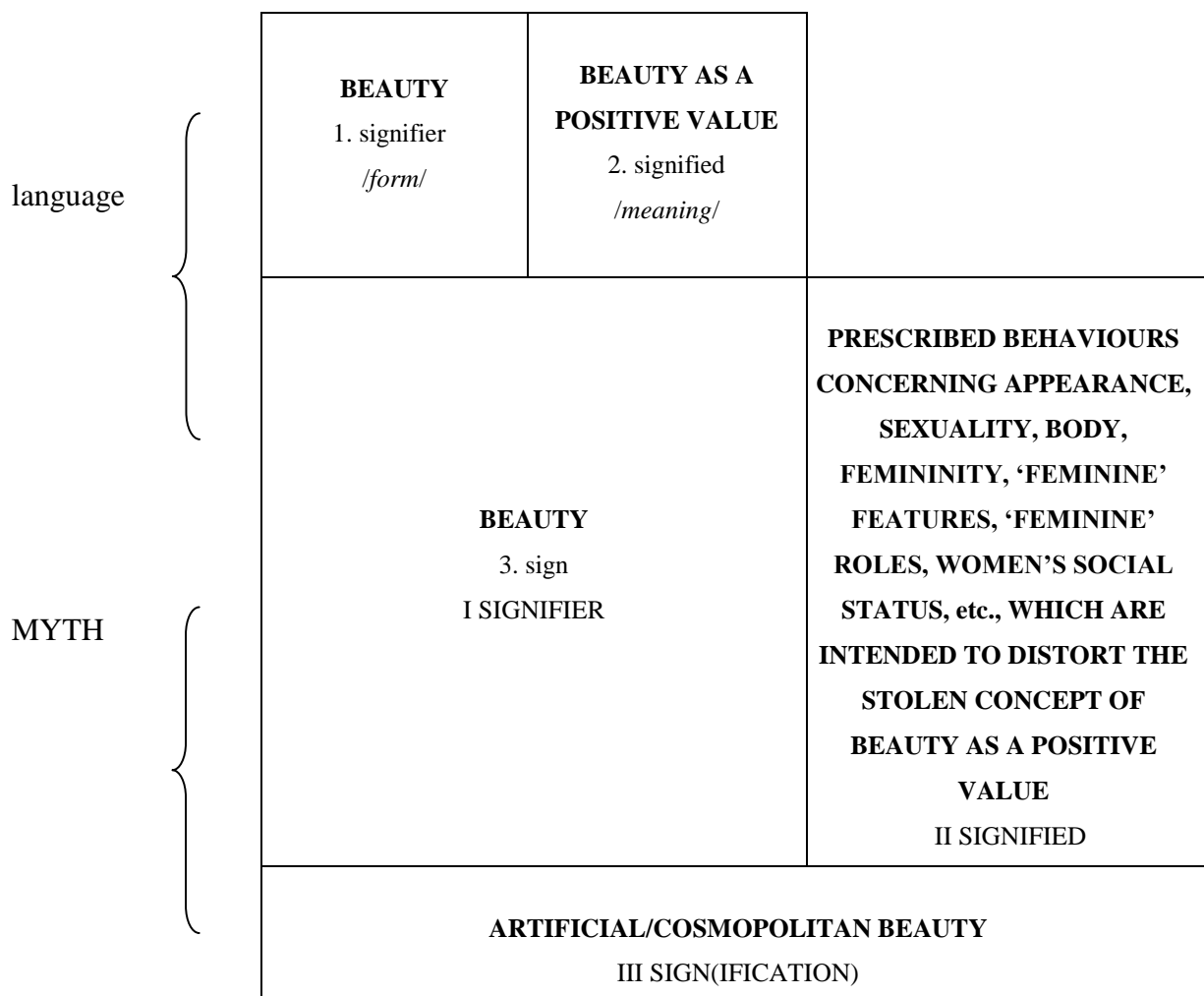


Figure 8 *Graphic presentation of the mechanism of the beauty myth*⁵¹

In the above-mentioned mechanism of the beauty myth, language is a starting point. At this level, *beauty* is considered as pure and universal, and it functions as an undeniably positive value. At the level of myth, on the other hand, the sense of beauty is distorted by the concept. The sense of beauty is not erased. The myth only alienates it. As a result, a new signification is imparted. The mythical word which emerges (*mythical beauty*) is defined by its intention rather than its literalness. It is, nonetheless, as it were, purified by this literalness. In fact, this literalness of sense makes it possible to distance the intentional appropriation of

⁵¹ Own study of the mechanism of the beauty myth, based on Barthes's (1991: 113) concept of myth as a type of speech, and Puzynina's (1991: 130-132) theory of the language of values.

the concept. In the mechanism of myth, words are stolen and, then, returned. However, they are never returned the same, since they are surreptitiously distorted in the meantime. Even though the literal sense of beauty is alienated, it is still there. New concepts are intentionally interpolated to it, to make it possible for the beauty myth to serve its essential function. The myth is successful since it draws on an immediate impression. As Barthes (1991: 129) claims, “myth essentially aims at causing an immediate impression – it does not matter if one is later allowed to see through the myth, its action is assumed to be stronger than the rational explanation which may later belie it. This means that the reading of a myth is exhausted at one stroke.” The myth is also successful due to the process of naturalisation of the concept. As Barthes explains, “myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden – if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious – but because they are naturalised” (: 130). What leads to the naturalisation of the beauty myth is certainly to a large extent its importunity and ubiquity in consumerist culture.

Mythical beauty is artificially created and shaped so as to accomplish the premises of modern consumerist societies with a patriarchal background. The fundamental aim of the beauty myth is to prescribe behaviours which are beneficial for political and economic reasons. *Cosmopolitan* beauty is artificial. It is mythical. And it is consistent with overall *Cosmopolitan* ideology which, unfortunately, serves the beauty myth.

Certainly, the graphic presentation above is a very simplified interpretation of the mechanism of the beauty myth. Hopefully, however, it demonstrates and summarises the main assertions of the dissertation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusions and critical remarks

What is the identity of the *Cosmopolitan* woman? How is the beauty myth realised in horoscopolical discourse? Those are the fundamental queries the present dissertation has attempted to answer through the use of linguistic and socio-cultural analyses.

The theoretical framework for the present research includes considerations of discourse and discourse analysis, horoscope as a specific genre serving as a representation of the discourse in question, the concept of myth, the socio-linguistic picture of the woman and femininity in the contemporary culture of consumerism, the language of success, the problem of values and gender stereotypes, the social construction of the body and the phenomenon of the beauty myth.

In brief, as far as the very research part is considered, quantitative and qualitative investigations of the horoscopolical discourse reveal how ambivalent is the image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman. And so her identity is assumed whose discursive construction is actually founded on this linguistic and socio-cultural picture.

The analysis of horoscopolical content indicates the most important aspects of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's life and outlines her profile. The immediate context in which they are embedded unequivocally complements the image. It is revealed that the *Cosmopolitan* ideology conveyed through the discourse in question conforms to the rules of consumptionist society, and successfully supports the structures and politics of the patriarchal culture. The discourse has been shown to have a character of the discourse of success and happiness – it displays all the features of the language of success, which contributes to the shaping of the overall linguistic-cultural image of the *Cosmopolitan* woman and to creating particular, supposedly unachievable visions of beauty, lifestyle and success. All this is a discursive manifestation of the beauty myth.

The beauty myth does not confine itself to appearance, even though the name of the phenomenon may imply it. The concept embraces attitudes and behaviours that are based upon false convictions. An artificial image of femininity constructed by the beauty myth

arises from the substitution of a specific system of values by a system of facts, and is enhanced in the process of naturalisation. So much for the concise summary.

Next, having analysed the discourse of the beauty myth, as exemplified by horoscopes, the following conclusions can be drawn. First of all, discourse analysis and the investigation of the beauty myth proved the initial assumptions to be correct. The beauty myth is a discursive phenomenon. The discourse of the beauty myth is realised through different genres, including horoscopes which constituted the material for present analyses. The examined discourse of the beauty myth, i.e. texts in question and their immediate context, reveal a reflective as well as social constructionist character. Furthermore, by shaping and promoting a particular vision of femininity, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology that also manifests itself, as has been proved, in the content of horoscopes, enhances and accomplishes the crucial assumptions of the beauty myth. It is also confidently assumed that construction of identity proceeds as based on false convictions concerning, among others, the concepts of femininity, female sexuality and power relations in the contemporary consumerist reality of patriarchal culture. The concepts implemented by means of discourse are to evoke particular social actions, specific behaviours on the part of women and these are believed to be beneficial in terms of established socio-cultural hierarchies, structures of power, economy and politics.

Finally, as planned and according to the assumptions of critical discourse analysis, critical remarks will complete the dissertation.

In the abovementioned conclusions, as well as throughout the whole dissertation, a critical attitude of the author towards the phenomenon of the beauty myth can certainly be seen. Though such a critical attitude may pose the danger of insufficient objectivity, it is hoped that the linguistic analysis adequately supports the initial thesis and provides sufficient linguistic evidence to prove it. On the other hand, Critical Discourse Analysis requires the taking of an explicit stance on the part of the author by exposing the connections between discursive and societal structures, by revealing inequalities and power relations in social reality, as well as economic and political motives.

To a large degree, remarks of critical character have appeared throughout the entire paper, especially in those fragments which concern the beauty myth, its realisation through the discourse of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes and its influence on identity construction. *Cosmopolitan* ideology has also received a critical note. Let us now sum up and complement the critical comments with greater focus.

To begin with, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology realises and legitimises the beauty myth through the texts and images that it offers to its readers and thereby unceasingly promotes the

images serving the myth. This can be concluded on the basis of the analysis of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes and their immediate context which consists of headlines and articles, anecdotes and other texts of various kind concerning beauty, body, health, diet and nutrition, fitness and workout, fashion, entertainment, love and sex, celebrities or work life and careers, always decorated with visual images. This visual component, sited immediately beside persuasive texts, which teems with beautiful faces and bodies (or particular body parts) of models and celebrities, often (half-)naked or eroticised, is crucial for the beauty myth in terms of cognition and building deeply rooted convictions of the myth's validity and truthfulness. Obviously, these are not the only images which can be found there; nevertheless, they constitute a considerable proportion of the whole *Cosmopolitan* magazine or website. Furthermore, it goes without saying that this practice is extensively applied in advertising – an inherent component of the *Cosmopolitan* realm. Both the paper version of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and the online are consistent and coherent in this matter. Both offer and shape (through texts and visual images) a particular vision of a *Cosmopolitan* woman, which vision, on the other hand (to emphasise it once more) fulfils the beauty myth to the full.

The discourse represented by *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes conforms to the discourse of the beauty myth. It fulfils the premises stated by Naomi Wolf (1991: 12). First of all, it enforces a conviction that the quality called *beauty* has a universal and objective character. The horoscopical content suggests that there exist standards for women to follow if they wish to meet social expectations and gain approval. Secondly, a *Cosmopolitan* woman is supposed to want to embody the quality of beauty. In the horoscopical discourse, this refers to the need, the necessity or readiness of the *Cosmopolitan* woman to take care with her overall image and public profile, together with whatever may hide behind this generalised and enigmatic expression. The word *public* implies the necessity of being equal to the expectations and requirements of others – people and institutions, rather than concentrating on the self and one's own needs. According to the myth, women are supposed to embody beauty since this is their key to success in all domains of life – at work, when socialising or else following the usual daily routine, the quality of beauty turns out to be the condition for women to make progress, to take another step. This is not to mention the reproductive success – certainly men want to possess women who are beautiful. In *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, it is observable that women are expected to stick to a particular pattern of thinking and to act accordingly. They are constantly being told that their image is important and that it is subject to ceaseless assessment on the part of other women and men. The greatest threat, however, is posed by the fact that all of this is instantly assumed as necessary and natural.

Apart from this, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology is also consistent with the myth of youth. Not only does it target young consumers and promote the quality of being (or rather looking) young, it also indicates aging as unbeautiful. Indeed, the intended age group of readers is between 18 and 35. It is they whom the *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes address. The discourse in question exposes youth as a virtue in the same fashion as it does with beauty, both through texts and visual images.

Furthermore, the horoscopes reveal that, contrary to its declarations, the *Cosmopolitan* ideology reinforces gender stereotypes. The examination of horoscopes shows some of these. The most striking concern women's inferiority in terms of financial issues, social status or ability to assure the safety or comfort of oneself and others. Such a message is conveyed mainly through the introduction of binary oppositions or else the juxtaposing of ideas allegedly cancelling each other. This leads to overgeneralisations and the association of particular characteristics with either men or women. According to horoscopes, *Cosmopolitan* women treasure freedom and independence. This stands in opposition to what men guarantee if the women decide to renounce the values of freedom and independence. The message is quite explicit – men equal comfort, security, prestige, money, and for a woman dependence too. Contrasting two supposedly opposite ideas creates false dilemmas which result in the feeling of loss and sacrifice no matter what decision is made. In either case, psychologically, the woman essentially ends up in the same situation of lack. She learns that she has to sacrifice one thing in order to gain something else and it is impossible to achieve both.

Another gender stereotype reinforced in horoscopical discourse is the superiority of male reason over female emotion. Being emotional is stereotypically a female domain whereas cool reasoning is stereotypically a feature of male. Frequent *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes' advice is to restrain emotional reactions and plan rationally.

Moreover, the concept of family appears in the horoscopes far too often not to be mentioned in the context of gender stereotypes even though this category conforms to their generic requirements. Important though career may be for a *Cosmopolitan* woman, family still constitutes a significant part of her life. It can be noticed as well, however, that family bonds are somewhat different. Some doubts also concern members of the *Cosmopolitan* woman's family. The concept is usually referred to vaguely, which may be explained once again as a generic feature on the one hand, or as a reflection and manifestation of the contemporary loosening of family ties and changing family patterns and roles, on the other.

Women concentrated on the unreasonable, unrealistic and unachievable aims promoted by the *Cosmopolitan* ideology, and convinced that they are legitimate,

paradoxically exhibit lower self-esteem. By taking particular action in order to improve their image (not only appearance, but the totality of what contemporary social reality defines as femaleness, which is subject to judgemental public opinion), they accomplish the beauty myth. To paraphrase the statement, they behave in the way prescribed by the beauty myth.

A further problem is that the *Cosmopolitan* ideology creates an ambivalent picture of a woman, which diverts the process of identity construction to an illusive track and contributes to its instability due to the picture of a woman full of paradoxes and facing artificially posed dilemmas. Moreover, in this way, mythic premises are acquired as facts.

It perhaps goes without saying that social cognition takes place within discourse and constitutes a significant element in the processes of identity construction. The statement is, of course, very general and certainly does not exhaust the complexity of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, it makes it possible to deduce a path from the beauty myth embedded in discourse to shaping of the self and an own sense of identity.

The beauty myth involves a meaning-making process in which particular images of women and femininity evoke specific women's response and behaviour which will be beneficial in economic and political terms. The beauty myth's message is persistent. It has to be in order to be naturalised and internalised. The stimuli come from all around, especially through mass media and advertising of products and services, by no means restricted to beauty industry. The texts and images of which the discourse of the beauty myth consists create all kinds of images of success embracing various realms of life. This can be concluded from the fact that the entire discourse largely displays all the features of the language of success. A great deal of such information transmitted discursively in a repeated fashion results in imperceptible acquisition, and the taking of ideas essentially mythical in their nature for granted, and considering them as facts.

The socio-linguistic images created by the beauty myth are artificial, though they become naturalised and, therefore, come to be perceived as reflecting the natural. Responding according to the beauty myth's intensions confirms, validates and legitimises its premises whereas the concepts are in fact merely symbols of the contemporary culture of consumerism. These are very important symbols that fuel the machinery of the consumptionist market, and maintain patriarchal social structures intact.

Why is all this oppressive? Because it contributes to inequalities between men and women in all aspects of their life. Because the system does not care about women if they only suffer from low self-esteem and cannot build a stable sense of identity. The beauty myth

sabotages the process of identity construction based on self-acceptance and self-love. Because it shapes false and biased convictions concerning women and femininity.

The beauty myth is essentially a significant part of money-and-power-oriented business. Although it pretends to advocate and promote intimacy, sex, happiness and life, although it asserts a celebration of women and femininity, it is, in fact, a combination of politics, economy, finance, emotional distance and sexual repression. Though the beauty myth may seem to be so at first sight, it is not about women at all, but about institutional and economic power and manipulation.

Within the discourse of the beauty myth, women are at one time exhorted to sympathise and maintain solidarity with other women and at another are provoked to compete and be blindly hostile and envious of the physical as well as the broadly understood beauty of other women. This obviously hurts and oppresses all women, but, most importantly, again serves the beauty myth.

The significance of men's participation in the beauty myth is beyond doubt – Wolf (1991: 288-289) also confirms this. Some individual men have certainly used the myth against women in an abusive way. However, the real powerful agents which enforce the beauty myth nowadays are institutions which depend on male dominance. Moreover, men are being deceived too, and with the use of the same psychological mechanism as are women. It turns out that undermining sexual self-confidence, and discrediting the sense of masculinity, works in favour of the beauty myth just as well. For decades, the beauty myth has been using female sexuality and undermining the sexual self-esteem of women; now, it is increasingly using male sexuality to undermine the sexual self-esteem of men. The mechanism is the same – half-truths evoke the same feelings of ambivalence, confusion, lack of self-acceptance and low self-esteem. All this to satisfy the same intention of the beauty myth. Because of the fact that men are socially and culturally more conditioned to be competitive than women, and to be separate from the body, they may turn out to be even more vulnerable to the beauty myth and suffer from it just as severely as have women. The pressure is increasing and the tension the beauty myth creates is harmful no matter which gender it targets.

It seems that people are more or less aware of the beauty myth, even though they may not address this phenomenon of repressive measures with this name. What the author is claiming within the pages of this work is not a novelty in the field of science, is by no means revolutionary. It is hoped, however, that adding yet another scientific voice – this time a socio-linguistic one – to this field of research will make it possible to draw particular attention to the threats the beauty myth may pose and will contribute to overcoming it. Moreover, it is

hoped that the linguistic analysis conducted and described here will expose the linguistic dimension of the beauty myth and encourage further research into its linguistic domain.

Finally, a dissertation of this kind requires a suggestion of a solution to a problem matter. Wolf (1991: 286) convinces of the need to begin with “a reinterpretation of ‘beauty’ that is *noncompetitive*, *nonhierarchical*, and *nonviolent*.” She views separating *beauty* from sexuality as an essential condition to achieve this. It is also important to learn to celebrate the uniqueness and individuality of people’s features and characteristics. According to Wolf, it is crucial to create a truly prowoman definition of beauty (: 286). Barthes (1991: 134), on the other hand, claims that the best way to overcome the impasse is to mythify the myth, i.e. to use it as a starting point for another semiological chain. This would involve taking its signification as a point of departure to a second myth. Both concepts have something in common – they essentially seem to suggest the same solution – to redefine, to reinterpret, to steal and restore. The concept of beauty as presented and enforced by the discourse of the beauty myth has to be, therefore, redefined and reinterpreted, or else its signification has to be taken and a reconstitution pursued. This obviously is not going to happen with immediate effect. It is a process. But it is hoped that critical scientific voices such as the present one and other individual attempts, considerations, reinterpretations and, above all, actions will initiate and bring closer positive changes.

In conclusion, the author’s primary attempt was to approach the beauty myth from a socio-linguistic perspective, to reveal its linguistic manifestations and to carry out a critical discourse analysis. The beauty myth was searched for in a corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes, as believed to be a representative sample of the *Cosmopolitan* ideology, since the author assumed that linguistic manifestations of the beauty myth would be found there. And there they were, to prove the initial thesis right.

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Appendix

Corpus of *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes

The compiled corpus of one thousand daily horoscopes was downloaded between 10th December 2011 and 27th March 2012 from the British edition of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine website [WWW₁]. None of the texts was changed or edited in any way as far as their content, structure or punctuation is concerned. The mistakes that appear in the horoscopes result from lack of interference on my part.

The compilation below includes a complete corpus of horoscopes analysed within the present research arranged in the order of their download date, most of which are consistent with the dates cited right before the horoscopes. Those that reappear or interfere with the order are most probably an editorial mistake that I have decided not to correct. Still, the reader is able to suppose the appropriate date.

To enable convenient navigation of the corpus and quick reference between the main text and *Appendix*, symbols have been ascribed to the horoscopes (e.g. H-1, H-2, H-3).

- H-1 Pisces December 10 – If you are part of a partnership of any kind (work or love) then you two need to be careful that you don't tread on other people's toes, or invade their turf, right now. If the situation was left to develop, then by mid 2012 it could be very difficult indeed. Put yourselves in other people's shoes. No partner of any kind? Does an ex require closure?
- H-2 Aquarius December 10 – Anyone who knew the person or situation well (perhaps to the point of being gently cynical) could have given you a little warning about that matter which has let you down. It affected your ideas about your image, appearance, reputation or public profile. And now you are left with...what? Actually, you're left with potential. Rethink, later!
- H-3 Capricorn December 10 – Was that little fantasy about money, houses, possessions, business interests or apartments just a total misinterpretation? Only in part. There was something alluring there, and the next few weeks will help you to reshape everything, so that you get closer to the truth, and further away from what isn't required. It's a journey well worth taking.
- H-4 Sagittarius December 10 – Some aspect of the internet, books, journalism, media (or related areas, like language development or public speaking) whisked you away. Now the shimmering fairy-dust has been swept away altogether, and you are left with a slightly disappointing reality. This is perfectly fine. You needed to know, and now you do. And this isn't without hope.
- H-5 Scorpio December 10 – You were hooked, temporarily, by an aspect of the house, flat, family or household (or domestic life) that glittered and gleamed. In the cold light of day it all looks rather different, but don't shed this completely. The person, place or situation hasn't gone anywhere. Rather, it's been parked somewhere a little more realistic, to be rediscovered later.
- H-6 Libra December 10 – There was nothing particularly real-world about what (or who) just took you on a Magical Mystery Tour. Even if it was just in your own mind. Sex, pregnancy, parenthood or other people's children were probably involved. Or maybe the generation born after yours, as a whole...In any case, this wake-up call is useful. It helps build something real, later on.
- H-7 Virgo December 10 – You wouldn't be the first person to entertain a magical dream about a particular work or academic scenario – or even something you volunteer for. Quite a few people have probably been there before you. But there is something to hang onto, here. You'll know more from December 21st. In the meantime, let's just say the universe is kind.
- H-8 Leo December 10 – You had a little dream of what might be, where your partner, ex or potential lover was concerned. Maybe you were even fascinated by a fantasy concerning your enemy, or opponent. The scenario may have been love or war, but that little bubble has now burst. Probably on both sides. You do have something fabulous to pursue, though. Go back later?

- H-9 Cancer December 10 – Something (or someone) held such fabulous allure, that your ideas about money, shopping, business, houses, precious possessions or apartments changed dramatically. And now what? Well, it's all a bit too real. But there is still some amazing potential there, if you can just let this elusive person, or situation, swim back in again. You need to test this.
- H-10 Gemini December 10 – It probably feels as if you are surfing, slipping and sliding at the moment – at least with life at university, or in terms of special ideas and projects, both online and offline. Maybe travel is involved, too, or people from other regions or nationalities. Like a fish, something/someone just wriggled away. But expect another chance, in a new way.
- H-11 Taurus December 10 – You grabbed something, on a work or university level (or just in terms of your success) and then it slipped away. Will it ever wriggle back into your grasp? Well, the annoying answer is: "It may well do." But you have a fair way to go, before you find out with any certainty. Within a week, life becomes clearer. By February it's firmly outlined.
- H-12 Aries December 10 – Well, that's probably one little fantasy about your social life, group connections or friendships that's bitten the dust. Or has it? You won't know for a few more weeks, and that's enough to keep you gently intrigued. The person or situation in question is fascinating, hard to pin down, and is as seductive as a plunge into the ocean on a summer's day.
- H-13 Aquarius December 12 – The career, university or voluntary situation you thought was fixed, has now come unstuck. But it could stick again. Oh, heaven forbid! Just allow the process to work itself out, because after Tuesday, you'll know. Until then trust in the knowledge that you are being given some Plan A and Plan B ideas, and even Plan C. And it's all so useful.
- H-14 Pisces December 12 – The world of travel, different nationalities, publishing or education seems uncertain. You thought you had it all mapped out, but the map just tilted. You are actually being shown some stronger answers, even though you may wish for an easier, more predictable life. Just let things sort themselves out after Tuesday when you'll know so much more.
- H-15 Capricorn December 12 – It looks as though things are suddenly up in the air with your friend, or the group. This is fine, because you have options. And over the long term, it may be that your first decision, way back in October or November, was the result of thinking on the run. Sometimes the universe intervenes to show you what might, perhaps, be a better bet.
- H-16 Sagittarius November 12 – What you don't tell other people about, or what concerns you (solo) is now under question. You thought you know where you stood with your secret, or your life alone, but you are now being kept in a holding pattern. There is a good reason for this. You made a judgement which was a little too hasty. So look deeper, answer a question.
- H-17 Scorpio December 12 – Three asteroids in Scorpio put you in an odd phase, where your appearance, reputation, outer package, name or profile is concerned. You're not sure where all this is headed, but you will be, soon after Tuesday. Sometimes things have to go backwards and forwards, just so you can pinpoint the other options you never saw at all.
- H-18 Libra December 12 – You're not sure about where it's all headed with the money, the house, the business or the flat (or the possessions). It will become much clearer to you once Mercury turns direct on Tuesday. For now, understand that you are being shown one or two possibilities that were not there before. And in the long run these may turn out to be superior.
- H-19 Virgo December 12 – The business of communication for you may involve the phone, the computer or the song lyrics. The media, the book or the paperwork...or just face-to-face connections. It's all swirling around in the ether, though, unresolved and perhaps destined to swirl for 24-48 more hours. Allow this to work itself out. It will do so, with a gentle push from you.
- H-20 Leo December 12 – Three asteroids in your department of houses, flats, family relationships and flatmates suggests an odd period when the 'known' factors become anything but! This is okay. You will be fine, as you needed to see more options than you first realised were there. And over the next few days you're going to get a much clearer picture of 2012 as it should be.
- H-21 Cancer December 12 – Your heart or soul is very much tied up in what is going on, or perhaps other people's children are involved. In any case, an answer will emerge once Mercury turns direct, after Tuesday. Right now you don't have a firm answer, and should probably allow for alternatives to suggest themselves. One of these will be absolutely splendid!
- H-22 Gemini December 12 – The work, university, volunteering or health question you thought had been answered is far from organised! This is okay, because in the long run you needed to know about a second alternative, and perhaps a third, to give you a much stronger set of options. The universe has its own way of escalating things right now. Trust in the process.
- H-23 Taurus December 12 – You thought you knew where you stood with your former, current or potential partner (or an opponent) but it's not yet clear. Allow the situation to develop naturally over the next 48 hours and push it along in the right direction. You're being shown alternatives for a good reason. You need to figure out strategy for the long-term right now.
- H-24 Aries December 12 – It will take a couple of days for a big question mark about money, property, business or possessions to be eliminated, but you are actually being helped by the universe – so try to remember you have a safety net. What you are experiencing is the Mercury Retrograde cycle drawing to a close. What was a done deal is still a knot to be untangled.
- H-25 Aquarius December 13 – People who changed their minds or were affected by computer, phone or transport issues are now back on track with you, so that important question about a friend or group can proceed. If you were held up online with social media, or any kind of network, that will also resolve. By the first week of January the final details will be inked in.
- H-26 Pisces December 13 – Your ambition, mission or position has been delayed, or even sent right back to the drawing board, since Mercury, the planet of communication, misfired. Now he is back on track and so are you. Make up for lost time between now and January. It may be the holiday season, but that doesn't mean you can't reschedule, or even substitute one plan.

- H-27 Capricorn December 13 – Whatever you covered up from other people has taken you backwards and forwards, and now nowhere! Or maybe it was a matter of being by yourself. That went nowhere as well. Now that the planets are moving ahead as they should (at least from the astrologer's point of view) life will sort itself out. Even if you can't actually share this!
- H-28 Sagittarius December 13 – You probably feel as if you followed a trail that led nowhere, in terms of your appearance, identity, profile, reputation, name or 'Me' packaging. That is correct. You did. But the trail will appear again, leading you in a new direction. Or you may decide to take another path, as the old life directions no longer work! By January it's all in the bag.
- H-29 Scorpio December 13 – You thought you were onto a dead certainty with the money, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions. But that person or situation went backwards and forwards. It will return to your radar by January, when you can either reshape everything to suit yourself, or scrap your original thought, in favour of something or someone far superior!
- H-30 Libra December 13 – Mercury, the planet of communication, has been travelling backwards in your house of telephones, computers, travel and transport. No wonder the last few weeks have been so thoroughly pear-shaped. Life will now return to normal, and you can also sort out a situation in which you never heard back, or didn't confirm anything. It's up for renewal.
- H-31 Virgo December 13 – Your ruling planet Mercury is now behaving himself, so you will know where you stand with a family member, flatmate, house question or flat issue. There may be related mysteries too, involving home improvements or a home exchange. Between now and January you will finally have information to fill in any gaps, or even go for a better alternative.
- H-32 Leo December 13 – You've gone nowhere fast with that godchild, young relative, pregnancy question or children's organisation. After spinning your wheels, though, you'll see action from today. This also applies to your sex life. If someone (or something!) ducked out of the picture, or you lost a communication link, expect a re-run or resolution by January.
- H-33 Cancer December 13 – You can now return to something that actually resembles a daily routine. Those work, university, lifestyle or health-related matters that just didn't make sense before, are now replaced with normality! You may have to let something or someone go, if it was a false beginning. Or perhaps this will be back, but in a different way. Time to move on.
- H-34 Gemini December 13 – You thought you had something (or someone) in the bag, in terms of your partner, potential partner or former opposite number. Maybe you even thought you had life nailed in terms of your rival, opponent or enemy. Well, so much for that. But from now until January, you can either go back to the drawing board, or ditch Plan A in favour of Plan B.
- H-35 Taurus December 13 – What you thought was a certainty, in terms of the business, the money, the house, the flat or the possessions – is not. A person or situation which was Mercurial (fleeting in nature, and all over the place in reality) has gone off the radar. Now that Mercury is direct, though, he, she, they (or it!) will return to you, or be replaced by an alternative.
- H-36 Aries December 13 – At last, some progress. You've been in a holding pattern as a student, teacher, traveller, publisher, writer or woman of the world. For weeks now, life has gone backwards and forwards, or just stalled. Now that the human beings (or equipment) in question is fully functional, you can either retrace your steps, or scrap something for an alternative.
- H-37 Pisces December 15 – Don't make the mistake of letting small (but significant) opportunities pass you by, in connection with family dreams, house fantasies or apartment wishes. These are meant to be there, and you will either leapfrog from one option to another (with results later in 2012) or find that the original chance leads you, indirectly, to a superior happy ending.
- H-38 Aquarius December 15 – Nothing is a coincidence or an accident in astrology, so you can relax in the knowledge that all those twists of fate involving babies, kids or teenagers lately, are meant to be there. They will take you to a bigger, better emotional life in 2012. It's also possible that sex is becoming more important to you. You'll gain your PhD in it, by late 2012.
- H-39 Capricorn December 15 – The lifestyle you deserve is a combination of the best daily routine for you, the liveliest good health and a role you feel fulfilled by. It may involve work, study or volunteering. At the moment, the universe is showing you glimpses of what might be, in 2012. Think big and do not think any person, organisation, place or option is beyond you!
- H-40 Sagittarius December 15 – You are quite right to be optimistic about a potential lover (or a good source for a possible new relationship.) Within six months you will either go further with this person or situation – or there will be a lovely connection springing forth, that guides you to the partnership you deserve. Coupled up and happy? You two are going to go further...
- H-41 Scorpio December 15 – The introductions are right, the connections feel good, and the business angle, numbers, house or flat has the ring of truth for you. Your old self tells you that you dare not think this big, or hope too much, but your savvy inner voice is telling you to go with this person, place or situation and use it, later next year, as a platform for bigger thinking.
- H-42 Libra December 15 – You don't get to travel more ambitiously, move to a life-changing place or explore your world without setting it up. Or at least, being set up by fate! The right people and places are now on your radar, and these will either be a wonderful part of the landscape by 2012, or lead to other options, which expand your geographical and mental horizons.
- H-43 Virgo December 15 – Join the dots, and you will see how one corner of your career or university picture is being filled in, six months before it happens. People and organisations which are only interested in solutions and growth, are coming into your world. The sky is really the limit, and even if you're not used to thinking this big, it's time to slowly accept what might be.
- H-44 Leo December 15 – Your social life will change in around six months, bringing in people whose life experience, culture, nationality or education adds to your own world – hugely. What's happening at the moment is a sneak preview of what might become an everyday part of your friendships or group involvements. So grab what comes your way and run with it.
- H-45 Cancer December 15 – What's unfolding in your life (your very secret life) or your inner world, is no accident. This little patchwork of possibilities is designed to take you higher, in about six months' time. The right place, situation or person is in front of you, and through six degrees of distance, you will be connected to the most incredible changes and improvements.

- H-46 Gemini December 15 – All the little signs and signals keep coming, and you aren't reading too much into these – yet – but within six months you'll see why your big relaunch partly depended on December 2011. Any issues about your appearance or reputation will melt away near your birthday. And if you're prepared to think big, you could be on the public radar, massively.
- H-47 Taurus December 15 – What seems to be fleeting and temporary is actually the key to unlock a financial, property or business door in 2012. You are around six months ahead of yourself, but that's perfectly fine. You've been thinking too small, or you've been stuck in a situation which you are outgrowing. It's very early days but there is terrific potential ahead.
- H-48 Aries December 15 – You've had another interesting brush with people or possibilities, which open the door to your biggest and best communication breakthroughs for years. They begin halfway through next year, but you are currently setting things up, just by snapping up opportunities as they come your way. Anything from a book to a Youtube hit could come out of it.
- H-49 Aquarius December 16 – Rather like a gas leak getting under a door, you have been surrounded by particular people over the past few years, who slip into situations which affect the way you are seen, or the way you look. Because this is about your public profile, reputation or appearance (and this is your 'advertising') make sure the gas leaks stop. No more confusion.
- H-50 Pisces December 16 – It's fair to say that your life has been messy, periodically, over the last few years because you didn't keep secrets, solitude, classified information or your 'me-time' controlled and contained. Whatever or whoever got in, wove anarchy in your life, which is why your time alone or your hush-hush stuff has never felt on solid ground. It will. Address it!
- H-51 Capricorn December 16 – The next few weeks require a bit of vigilance and common sense. You are famous for these qualities, but they have vanished, at particular points over the last few years – especially in relation to money, houses, business arrangements, your possessions, or apartments. Now is the time to be tough with yourself. Be kind after February!
- H-52 Sagittarius December 16 – The same person, or situation, is back in your life. It involves the written or spoken word, or perhaps your use of images to communicate. It's great to have something to say, or something for people to read, but just look at the potential for mild anarchy, between here and February. Why repeat something when you know it never worked?
- H-53 Scorpio December 16 – After the first week of February, your family situation, house, flat or share household (or home life with a partner) will be so much more solid. It will feel far more realistic and grounded. For now, though, you can avoid some baffling situations over the next six-seven weeks by refusing to be drawn into a situation which is wide open for confusion.
- H-54 Libra December 16 – The planet Neptune has been drifting through your house of sex and intimacy for years. This is where the occasional contraception or pregnancy question comes up for you, or even where you think about dating people with children. Then there are kids in the family circle, or kids in your working or voluntary life. Today's message? Make some rules!
- H-55 Virgo December 16 – Your working life or time at university has been a little like surfing for the past few years. You've often been all at sea, bobbing around or just caught up in the ebb and flow of the most confusing circumstances. You'll be far more grounded and centred after February. For now, though, be practical about people, places or plans which are also, all at sea.
- H-56 Leo December 16 – You are mesmerised by a vision of what might be, in terms of your partner, potential partner or former partner. Maybe you're even drifting into a particular situation with someone who is against you. In all cases, this is about boundaries. Boundaries is the magic word that would have protected you against confusion for years. So pop them in again!
- H-57 Cancer December 16 – If you want to avoid the kind of baffling (and slightly wobbly) situation that followed you around with money, houses, business interests, possessions or flats over the last few years, be really careful with the new mood around you. Something or someone has drifted into your world, and you want to float along with it. But what is really sensible here?
- H-58 Gemini December 16 – There is a reason why you haven't made more solid progress with particular projects, places or faces over the last few years. As a student, traveller, writer, teacher, publisher or woman of the world, you've been stuck in the most muddled cycle of your life. This ends within eight weeks. For now, though, ask yourself if the muddle zone is back.
- H-59 Taurus December 16 – Much as you'd like to enter into another chapter of your career or life at university (and it really does feel like a book, or story) think carefully. You are either going to repeat similar issues with the same people or group, or find yourself in the same scenario from 2009 or 2010, with new faces. The potential is there for confusion, same as it ever was!
- H-60 Aries December 16 – This is your subtle reminder to keep it real with a friend or group. Oh, it would be great to slip into this again (or even slip into it for the first time) forgetting the boundaries. But there are really good reasons why you need to be more practical about the future. It will feel very different by the second week of February. Then you can put this to the test.
- H-61 Aquarius December 17 – It may be three or four more weeks until you are fully on top of what has to alter, in terms of the secrets you keep, or the inner life you lead. This is due to Christmas, New Year and a whole bunch of other factors. The main thing is, you're on top of this. And you weren't, for a long time! You're now in a fantastic position to make overdue changes.
- H-62 Pisces December 17 – Sometimes other people hold up a mirror, so even though the behaviour of one particular acquaintance, friend or collection of people has been super-controlling, you will gain from examining your own approach with a microscope. If you were outside the situation, and not yourself, how would you see yourself? Is there anything that could be improved?
- H-63 Capricorn December 17 – You can do small things to make a difference to the way you feel about your image or reputation. Or your appearance. The big agenda has to wait until the second week of January, with some encouraging signs of progress before. At the moment, though, even one or two smaller attempts are heartening. You're taking the controls back!
- H-64 Sagittarius December 17 – You're now on top of people, organisations or situations which were way out of control in 2011 and affected your comfort zone with money, your possessions, the business, the house or the flat. You're working towards a solution, shall we say. Have a look at the less obvious aspects of your situation though. You have to see the bigger picture.

- H-65 Scorpio December 17 – Sometimes things just happen, and you aren't fully aware of how much has altered. This is the case with your communication with others in 2011. One issue which has woken you up is already being handled. You have support there, to deal with it. What you may have missed, though, is another subtle factor. And that can truly be fixed soon too.
- H-66 Libra December 17 – You will have to wait until the second week of January, when everyone else is in their right place, time and space, to reshape the house, flat, family or flatmate situation. The good thing is, you're now waking up to exactly what needs to happen and why. You were taken over by fate, other people or some other 'overwhelm' in 2011. But do plan ahead.
- H-67 Virgo December 17 – Talk about the big year-end reorganisation! It's going to be epic, because you need to realise how much your sex life, or your relationship with the next generation of children, has been taken over. By 'taken over', I mean, dominated by obvious factors, as well as not-so-obvious ones. Have a look at the way life was two years ago. Compare.
- H-68 Leo December 17 – You want to reorganise work, diet, fitness commitments or university life. You could throw this into the file marked L for Lifestyle. The problem is lack of opportunity to realistically reshape everything. You're in a stronger position in the second week of January, once the silly season is over. But you can have a few dress rehearsals at the moment too.
- H-69 Cancer December 17 – You're still not in the right time and place for the rethink about your partner, former partner or potential lover. Or even your enemy! You can see what you have to do. You even have a list in your head. But it looks as though a proper commitment to reorganisation will have to wait until the first or second week of January. It's coming, though.
- H-70 Gemini December 17 – That drifting, uncertain feeling about a person from another nationality or culture is familiar. Or perhaps you're feeling that row of question marks, pitter-pattering on your head, about the university, school, publishing or internet outlook for next year. Nothing is fixed yet, everything is open to inspection. But within seven weeks you're on solid ground.
- H-71 Taurus December 17 – You have some thinking to do, about your partner, former partner or potential partner. There may also be a rival, opponent or enemy in the works. Basically, tis the season to think about how much of a free spirit you want to be. Your awareness of the pros and cons of a commitment looks very high. Security is on offer but what about independence?
- H-72 Aries December 17 – Your house of money, property and business sees Diana, Juno and Bacchus (three powerful asteroids) at work right now. There are big questions about freedom and independence to answer. However, it looks as though the good life is also on offer. Just read the fine print, if there is any, because after October the situation may change. What's ahead?
- H-73 Aquarius December 18 – You've been moving towards the future (in terms of sex, intimacy or the world of children) all year long. And you know you're right to hope, even if you keep being blocked. Even now, the situation is freeing up. Someone who operates as a liaison person is around you to assist. And from June the biggest and the best outcomes could be so accessible.
- H-74 Pisces December 18 – Someone whose family background or job situation has trained them to go between powerful people, or powerful organisations, is very good at building bridges. This person is now around you in terms of the family, the house, the flat or the share household. Watch and learn. Because this will play its part in the most wonderful outcomes from June 2012.
- H-75 Capricorn December 18 – Your lifestyle could be so much bigger and better next year. Oh, the potential is there, and you can see how things might be in terms of your work, your wellbeing or your life at university. Why does nothing ever really change, though? It will, from June 2012, with tons more free space from September. For now, create the future. Use a situation!
- H-76 Sagittarius December 18 – You've gone in circles with your high hopes for your former, current or potential partner. Or even with that enemy or rival of yours. Keep hoping and accept the biggest and best, when it is hinted at. From June 2012 so much will become possible. And from September 2012 the stuck karma has gone. For now? Use that oh-so-useful situation.
- H-77 Scorpio December 18 – What is being hinted at, in your life, seems too good to be true, in terms of the business, financial or property potential for 2012. Maybe you think it's too over the top. Well, set that attitude aside! You can't stand in your own way. Even now, there is a person who acts as a go-between or mediator in a situation, who is helping communication.
- H-78 Libra December 18 – You must be wondering when on earth things are really going to start moving, with your ideas about travelling, relocating, publishing, writing, teaching or studying. Or maybe you're just so focussed on people from other regions or countries. The good news is, it's in motion now. 2012 will remove every obstacle. Just use that person who's the link.
- H-79 Virgo December 18 – A person who is used to going between two powerful individuals, organisations or 'worlds' has been around to assist you with your career, or life at university, in December. He or she is still plugged into the situation. From June 2012 the seeds of what you are sowing now will produce incredible harvests. Promotion? Hot new job? Big results?
- H-80 Leo December 18 – You know you're right about a group project. It promises big things, and these will unfold from June next year. In the meantime, you keep being thrown back into the same revolving door – with the same old stuff every time. This too will improve in 2012. In fact, it's over by September. For now, though, make the most of a person who's so well-placed.
- H-81 Cancer December 18 – You know you could take something secret, or behind the scenes, so much further. But every time you try (and you are right to try!) you get stuck. Or blocked. This ends for good in September 2012. But before then, there are some wonderful opportunities in store. A person who acts as a go-between or intermediary has been assisting. And still does.
- H-82 Gemini December 18 – You keep getting blocked whenever you try to reach for better things in terms of your look, image, public profile or name. This will improve hugely from May 2012 and you will be entirely free of the 'repeat, repeat' scenarios in September. All this is coming towards you now, through tiny hints and signs from the universe. Just say yes to everything!
- H-83 Taurus December 18 – Your instincts tell you that all the twists of fate in December are going to help you move towards a remarkably bigger financial, property or business future. Allowing yourself to accept what could be enormous (compared to your old life) is the first step. It will kick off in May. For now, just let the universe lay the train tracks for the new express.

- H-84 Aries December 18 – The whole business of communication has been potential, potential, potential for far too long. One of the reasons you never seem to make the big breakthrough required, is the Moon's South Node in Gemini, which spells stuck situations and repetitive scenarios! There is now a go-between involved though. And this person is connecting the future.
- H-85 Aquarius December 19 – Every 29 years the 'teacher' planet Saturn moves through your house of university life, publishing, travel, college, other cultures and other nationalities. No wonder you've learned so much in the last 18 months. It's never particularly easy. And maybe you could have done this faster, or more efficiently. Still, another useful lesson is waiting.
- H-86 Pisces December 19 – You are having an epic financial, property and business cycle so no wonder it all feels like learning to drive. Or learning to fly (let's be optimistic). From the end of 2012 the hard bits are over. But there's always an unbelievably practical, useful new lesson to learn. And so it is now. Just do what's required and remember, experts are always on hand.
- H-87 Capricorn December 19 – Your chosen field or industry, or your work ambitions in general, is in focus. This also applies to any voluntary role you have and your life at university. Accept that there is always something new to learn and that every time you do this, you train yourself for the future. This is the real world and it's like this for everyone! So keep the L plates on.
- H-88 Sagittarius December 19 – Friends, acquaintances, social media and groups – what else is there to learn, that you haven't already been forced to learn, since 2010? Well, there's an entirely new skill you could be absorbing. A practical lesson. And with a bit of patience (with yourself) and a reliance on an expert or three, you could be so much further along the road.
- H-89 Scorpio December 19 – Saturn, the planet which says 'Get real about the world and start learning' is now in your life again. His main area of life education is the secrets you keep. Or the time you spend alone. There is a potent but passing bit of learning ahead. Once you know, and have had a dress rehearsal, you will be better equipped for 2012 and beyond.
- H-90 Libra December 19 – Saturn in Libra has taught you (the long, tricky way!) about all aspects of your appearance, presentation, online profile, promotion or even publicity over the last 18 months. You've now mastered quite a lot that eludes other women, even though you may feel you still have L plates on. Right now there's another mini-lesson to take on board.
- H-91 Virgo December 19 – Only Pisces women have a trickier money, business or property cycle at the moment. And yet you've come so far it's amazing. Look back at where you were, in terms of your financial 'education' in 2009 and you'll see. Now, there is something entirely new to tackle. There is expert advice on hand, though. But you will need to do some homework.
- H-92 Leo December 19 – Communication in all its forms (podcasting, face-to-face talking, writing, blogging, websites, phones, iPads, computers) has been a big area of learning for you over the last 18 months. Now there is another lesson. Each time you take on something new, you become older and wiser! News flash: a personal, heart and soul matter will move forward.
- H-93 Cancer December 19 – You've trained yourself remarkably well over the last 18 months (or been trained!) and now you're much further along with the family, share household, flat or house situation. Still, there is more to come. An area of your home life, family tree or property situation which you tend to duck, dive and avoid requires a deep breath and some tactics.
- H-94 Gemini December 19 – The world of babies, children and junior teens has been your big teacher since 2010. And you've come a very long way. By extension this includes sex, because this is where you must decide if you want to be a mama or not. (Or he does!) Now, you realise you have to learn on the run, yet again. But that's fine. Just ask wise people who've been there.
- H-95 Taurus December 19 – Until the end of 2012, the 'teacher' planet Saturn will be in your house of work, university life and lifestyle (your wellbeing). The lesson at the moment is pretty obvious. You are more than halfway through this cycle, though, and you've already educated yourself quite remarkably, if you look back. Still, you need to be super practical about all this.
- H-96 Aries December 19 – You are learning all the time about your former, current or potential partner. Or even about anyone who is against you. It could all be summed up in a new book you write yourself – 'Aries and Her Other Halves – What Not To Do.' This is perfectly fine, though. You know, now. In the meantime, go back to a likely travel, publishing or education prospect.
- H-97 Aquarius December 20 – To be heard, read or understood in a way you hadn't anticipated is exciting. Communication is the state of your nation and it's worthy of celebration. This sudden twist in your affairs is going to make 2012 utterly thrilling if you follow it up. A parallel development? The constant promise of financial gain or improvement. Or money in kind. It's close.
- H-98 Pisces December 20 – The money, the possessions, the business interests, the house or the apartment surprises you, excites you and re-energises you. This was the last thing you expected at this particular time, but it could be so remarkable next year, if you take it further. And then there's your way with words, images or ideas. That massive potential is still waiting.
- H-99 Capricorn December 20 – The house, flat, family or domestic situation offers you the most unusual, unexpected but delightful possibilities. You may have to look at things all over again, but so what! Call it an untapped treasure trove and leave it at that. The constant hum of potential with children, babies or teens is also there. And of course, sex. From Christmas, it rolls.
- H-100 Sagittarius December 20 – The world of babies, children or teens could turn your life around, in amazing new directions, as if it had all just been put through a glittering revolving door of change. 2012 could be so full of potential for you. If the next generation is not calling you, then a relationship certainly is. This could result in parenthood one day, or stepmum status!
- H-101 Scorpio December 20 – Your working life, university commitment or wellbeing takes a fascinating turn now, and you may have to alter your plans for 2012, but for the most exciting and hopeful reasons. At the same time, it's pretty clear that you have bags of unlocked potential with your former, current or potential partner. And even that ghastly person could benefit you.
- H-102 Libra December 20 – Thrilling and life-changing developments involving your former, current or potential partner are here. Or your enemy, rival or opponent. You never banked on this, at least not with these particular details or timing. But suddenly 2012 looks way more interesting, for the most unusual reasons! That cash, property or business potential is still hovering.

- H-103 Virgo December 20 – This isn't what you expected to hear at all, at least not so soon, and in this specific way – but what an incredibly exciting turn of events for your financial, property or business world. You can't help but fail to remember the unlocked promises linked to publishing, academia, travel or foreign people either. They haven't gone anywhere. Just wait.
- H-104 Leo December 20 – The world of publishing, academia, travel or foreign connections offers you zoom-zoom potential as the universe throws you a surprise and you suddenly see why 2012 could be so exciting. This was never on your radar but maybe it should have been, all along! Also coming your way, stunning opportunities for success, within five days of this forecast.
- H-105 Cancer December 20 – The last thing you anticipated, at least in such a specific way, is unfolding in connection with your ambition, position or mission. This is exciting, but when you think it through, you'll also realise it holds potential you did not realise was there. In other developments, you have every right to be so hopeful about a friendship or a special group.
- H-106 Gemini December 20 – The wow factor is really high now, thanks to your friend or a particular group of people. This is just the start of something you'd never even properly thought about, and it could be so exciting in 2012. The other intriguing thing is the growing sense of optimism about something you cover up or do alone. From Christmas Day this really starts to roll...
- H-107 Taurus December 20 – What you cover up from other people, call classified, or do alone is about to trigger all kinds of exciting options you had never fully thought out, before. And the future shall set you free...Meanwhile it's pretty clear that there is huge potential waiting to be unlocked for you personally, in terms of your name, face, image or 'Brand Taurus.' It's so close.
- H-108 Aries December 20 – A big move forward with the cash, business, house, possessions or flat goes in tandem with exciting new possibilities for your name or face. You won't actually see the full potential of the financial or lifestyle side of your world until Christmas Day (when it rolls until May). But the thrilling options for your image are right here, right now, ready to roll.
- H-109 Aquarius December 22 – You have gone on a long and winding road, but a rather exciting one, with your ideas, projects, plans, courses – and use of technology – throughout the last 12 months. Things you had not expected on your journey are, even now, turning out so well for you. And here's something brand new and unexpected. Use this chance or lose it, in 2012.
- H-110 Pisces December 22 – The more complex side of your financial, property or business situation (or the shared or borrowed possessions) is no fun. No picnic. And certainly no champagne party. But what about your own cash, house, flat, business or possessions? Your horoscope says that is where one of the most exciting and unexpected changes of the year is unfolding.
- H-111 Capricorn December 22 – You didn't exactly have this on the list for your house, flat, family or share household situation next year. Or your live-in partner situation! Yet who needs a list, when the future looks this unique and remarkable? You are being challenged to rise to a very different kind of occasion. How are you going to make the most of new and exciting options?
- H-112 Sagittarius December 22 – The part that babies, children or young teens play in your future (the next generation) just changed for the better. What you have here is a creative, exciting, brand new possibility you never anticipated. This might also apply to a sexual relationship where you might – one day – have a baby or take on someone else's kids or godchildren.
- H-113 Scorpio December 22 – Work, university life, diet, fitness, volunteering. Oh yes, and sleep and relaxation patterns. What will you reinvent first, on that list? Because you can. Something really amazing is breaking through in your astrological chart. It's called overdue change for 2012. Drop an old, tired way of thinking. Follow that big signpost that just appeared for you.
- H-114 Libra December 22 – Your former, current or potential partner holds the key to something shiny and new. Or maybe this is about your enemy, rival or opponent. Either way, shiny and new is good. You may feel as if you have an L plate stuck on your tights, but that's half the fun. It's time to head in (perhaps) radical new directions for 2012 and see all possibilities.
- H-115 Virgo December 22 – You know all about the vulnerability you feel (it never quite goes away) over your own cashflow, savings, debts, possessions, house, flat or business. But in direct contrast there is now something genuinely exciting and liberating to snap up, in connection with a second or third party. It makes 2012 seem immediately challenging yet thrilling.
- H-116 Leo December 22 – What you are being offered as a publisher, traveller, student, writer or teacher is exciting. Don't do any of those things at the moment? Then it's about people from other countries, regions or cultures. Either way it's a trip, or a head trip. Your knowledge is practically zero. Your experience in minus figures. But this could be so thrilling if you pursue it now.
- H-117 Cancer December 22 – The midheaven of your chart is where you strive for career or academic heaven, or volunteer heaven, if you give your time to a non-profit. It's also where the most unexpected and thrilling changes are unfolding. This is untried territory. But it's also allowing you to think far more broadly and creatively about what 2012 might do for you. And you for it!
- H-118 Gemini December 22 – Your social life, friendships or group involvements at the moment are a little like the lyrics to the Rocky Horror Show. You are jumping right, left and in all directions. There's nothing horrid about what's unfolding though. This is really exciting, and you didn't exactly expect it. Use what is there to open up amazing new avenues for yourself next year.
- H-119 Aquarius December 23 – One or two people who have taken their own, unique, maverick approach to words (or communication technology) are now turning your head. Good! It's not the biggest thing on your list, but little by little, the cycle you are in will develop your ideas, and build on the themes around you now. And by 2012 this could be so exciting.
- H-120 Pisces December 23 – Is this about your values? (What you will, and won't, sell out for – and what you consider priceless...) If not, then it's certainly about your money, house, business, possessions or flat. And this is a story which just keeps building in your horoscope, day by day. Look to the people who challenged their fathers, or the 'authorities'. What are you learning?
- H-121 Capricorn December 23 – What happens next year in terms of the family, house, flat or share household (or your live-in partner) is now being 'seeded' or planted in the present. That's why people, places or possibilities which are unusual and intriguing are around you. And although these seem like small priorities, they could take you further, if you let them.

- H-122 Sagittarius December 23 – People who are quite radical, unusual or even highly eccentric are teaching you something useful, true and good. Little by little, your old ideas about children, motherhood, contraception or sex are being taken in new directions. It's called your Uranus Fifth House Cycle and it's here to stay. Be open and stay open. What are you discovering?
- H-123 Scorpio December 23 – It's early days, and you haven't had enough time to absorb the full impact of what could happen – but stay tuned, and stay open. Your job, your life as a student or your volunteer role could be reinterpreted in such an exciting, new and different way next year. It feels like there's a wave of change happening around you. There is. Grab the tip; surf.
- H-124 Libra December 23 – If you are single then treat the new people or possibilities as symbols of change. The real change happens in your head and heart, of course, because you are a walking attitude shift, just waiting to happen! If you are in a partnership that is stale or tired, it just can't stay the same for long. Happily coupled? Wow. Zingy new options are coming.
- H-125 Virgo December 23 – The 2012 outlook for your money, house, possessions, business or flat depends on how open you are now. How willing to experiment with new factors (or people) coming into your life. None of this was ever remotely on your agenda last month. But all of it is so useful. And if it works, and it grows, this could help set you free in so many ways.
- H-126 Leo December 23 – Over the last few days, you have attracted one or two people (or situations) which could make a huge difference to your life as a teacher, traveller, writer, student or publisher in 2012. If your priority is learning more from those of other nationalities or cultures, that's taking off now too. The more you open up, the better. Just see what's possible.
- H-127 Cancer December 23 – The unusual, odd, unexpected and (apparently) not hugely important stuff that circles your ambitions now, is meant to be. The people, places or possibilities may be way down on your list. But see what happens when you let things in the door. Your openness and tolerance, and your ability to give others space, suddenly makes 2012 look intriguing.
- H-128 Gemini December 23 – The more open you are, the more intriguing your social life, friendships or group involvements become. People or situations which are surprising are now filtering through. These may not seem terribly important now, but by early 2012 this could all move to the top of your list. Tolerance is the magic word, though. Others deserve their freedoms too.
- H-129 Aquarius December 25 – Merry Christmas! The family members dotted on the landscape today hold a promise of problems solved, opportunities offered and good things in store. You'll see it starting to take place, literally from the time the fairy lights start winking on the tree, against the background of the stars. Santa's 2012 gift? A new home or home improvements.
- H-130 Pisces December 25 – Merry Christmas! Santa's presents this year may involve a new phone or computer (which will change your life) or a foreign language, multimedia or internet advantage, of some kind...In any case, 2012 is the Year of the Idea. You will soon be excited at the most amazing opportunities to get your message across, in the biggest and best way.
- H-131 Capricorn December 25 – Merry Christmas! The children, new babies or schoolkids around you this December have a special part to play in 2012 and will bring all good things. So will any children's organisation that touches your life. Jupiter, the planet of opportunity, is moving direct in your Fifth House of pregnancy, godchildren and young relatives. Just watch what happens.
- H-132 Sagittarius December 25 – Merry Christmas! And a belated Happy Birthday for the last few weeks. Wonderful things are in store for you now that your ruling planet Jupiter is moving forwards. From today, you can expect five months of progress and opportunities with your work or course. It's not only that. It's a general lifestyle-lift. Like a face-lift but so much nicer.
- H-133 Scorpio December 25 – Merry Christmas! Take a deep breath, because if you are single, the very first signs that someone (or something) special are around you, from today. If you are with a partner, but unhappy, the light is now shining at the end of the tunnel and it will be dazzling within three days. Happily loved up? Wow! You two deepen your commitment, starting now.
- H-134 Libra December 25 – Merry Christmas! Santa's sack is full, for the first time in months, and from today until May 2012, you will receive benefits thanks to other people's money, possessions, houses, business interests or apartments. Maybe it's a large organisation, like a bank or government department, or employer. Maybe it's just family or partners. But gratefully receive...
- H-135 Virgo December 25 – Merry Christmas! Your journeys, academic qualifications, teaching credentials, books, internet ideas or foreign friendships are about to take you on the most incredible pathway, starting today. Nothing really took off in 2011 but now that Jupiter is direct, the potential which was locked can be released. Within three days you'll see the very first signs.
- H-136 Leo December 25 – Merry Christmas! From this day forward, until May 2012, you will find career problems are solved, and any issues about being a student are fixed. The solution will benefit you and everyone around you. Better still, it's time for some genuine professional or academic expansion. Within days you will be the right lioness, in the right place, at just the right time.
- H-137 Cancer December 25 – Merry Christmas! If your friends and online tribe seems to be playing a bigger and more important role today, it's thanks to Jupiter, the planet of good news and big thinking. He's now finally moving forward in your house of group projects and deep friendship. Even the new people who are wishing you Merry Christmas will be such good news in 2012.
- H-138 Gemini – December 25. Merry Christmas! Did you know that between now and May 2012 you will experience the biggest and the best in your secret life or your hush-hush world? Not even the most psychic astrologer on the planet knows what you are up to, but it's going to be great. Even though this classified area of your life didn't deliver in 2011, it will do so, from today.
- H-139 Aquarius December 26 – Boxing Day shows you what a mini wrestling-match your career or life at university is. In the red corner you have yourself, as a free woman – without any position or particular place – but totally independent. In the blue corner you have your contracted, locked-down self. She's got the kudos and the security, but no freedom. What to do?
- H-140 Pisces December 26 – The world of travel, different nationalities, publishing or education whirls around your head. And only you can decide if you would rather be free, and out on your own – or cosy and secure. Of course, one woman's 'cosiness' is another woman's ball and chain. But then again, when you are your own person, there is absolutely no guarantee of security!

- H-141 Capricorn December 26 – You have a friend or acquaintance (in your tribe, online or offline) who sums up the big dilemma for women everywhere. Should we be single and free, or shackled up and shackled? This female in your life either loves being married or de facto, and having the prestige and comfort – or she'd rather be out in the woods. Or out on the town. And you?
- H-142 Sagittarius December 26 – Your dreams are quite interesting at the moment, as they reflect your deepest dilemmas about being a free woman, or belonging to a man. You will sort out quite a lot this way. Or maybe you're having strange cosmic experiences relating to those questions! Watch for peacocks and dogs as symbols. Peacocks belong. Dogs run free. And you?
- H-143 Scorpio December 26 – Some questions about your public profile, online reputation, face, body or general me-ness are surfacing right now. If you accept a particular situation now on offer, you exchange independence for promises. If you decide against it, then you have spontaneity back in your life, and self-mastery – but you really will be on your own.
- H-144 Libra December 26 – Juno and Diana, two important asteroids, now sit in your house of money, Christmas presents, houses, apartments and business interests. Juno always asks you if you want to have comfort, safety, security and belonging – or if you'd prefer to cut loose. Diana always reminds you that glorious freedom and independence never offers any guarantees.
- H-145 Virgo December 26 – Communication is the key to your emotions now, according to your horoscope. So it's about the internet and the phone, and perhaps the cards in the post. However, this is also about broader communication; being heard or read as you wish. Only you can decide if it's better to have security and belonging in the situation, or to absolutely go your own way.
- H-146 Leo December 26 – Well of course it's about the family, the house, the flatmates or the apartment at this time of year. Or maybe the accommodation, full stop – as well as the relatives. You are now being shown the pros and cons of belonging, and being tied down on some level. Are you a free spirit at heart who craves an unlocked door? Or do you need uber security?
- H-147 Cancer December 26 – Matters of the heart, soul or perhaps the knickers are affecting one in two Cancerian women. Do you want to be a domestic goddess, and a bird in a gilded cage? Or do you want to fly your own way? For the remaining Cancerians, there are big questions about pregnancy, dating a Dad, or your tiny relatives and friends' kids. Freedom or not?
- H-148 Gemini December 26 – The focus is on your job, your diet, your life at university, your fitness or your volunteer role. The question is, how do you feel about being locked in, and tied down? Does it make you feel as if you belong to someone, or something? Or do you crave the freedom and space of being your own woman? Only you can figure out these soul questions.
- H-149 Aquarius December 27 – You really need all those Christmas gadgets and gizmos, that came your way (or other peoples' way) as they will change the way you speak, write or use images. They will revolutionise, in the most exciting way, your ability to be heard or read, or just understood. Hey, you may even be making up your own little gadget or gizmo now. Patent it!
- H-150 Pisces December 27 – It's been a long, long uphill road for you in terms of the finances, house, business, flat or possessions (linked to individuals or organisations, anyway). And yet, what's this? Could it be the planet of exciting change, Uranus, lighting up your zone of values? It means this much, now: a liberating 'Aaaaah' of relief as you change what things are worth!
- H-151 Capricorn December 27 – What you stumbled upon in terms of family relationships, flatmate set-ups, domestic life, mortgages, leases or home improvements is now a major and exciting part of your new world. And it's now accelerating. The latest and greatest ideas or inventions will help you. 2012 is already shaping up to be another great leap forward. Amaze!
- H-152 Sagittarius December 27 – You seem to have spent 2011 looking at the question of intimacy, your sexuality, future step-mum status or even pregnancy – with new eyes. This applies no matter if you are single or with a partner. You might say necessity has been the mother of invention. Well, you're inventing the radical new 2012 approach right now. But allow space, time...
- H-153 Scorpio December 27 – People always go on about changes to their eating patterns, lifestyle or fitness commitments when a new year is around the corner. But you're already ahead of them. What you were experimenting with this year may have taken a while to form fully in your mind, but it is about to become a reality. Don't rush this though. Go over the details again!
- H-154 Libra December 27 – You've created something new in your life, because of what happened with your former, current or potential partner this year. It's so new that it's going to potentially confront people if you are too hard and fast about everything. This applies to any enemy, opponent or rival too. Allow time and space for he or she to get used to it all.
- H-155 Virgo December 27 – It's all been such a long, slow, steep learning curve with your own money situation. Or associated issues, like the rent, mortgage or business. At the same time, you've been experimenting, with the most exciting results, in areas that involve other people or organisations. Call it second or third party finance or property. More progress is coming.
- H-156 Leo December 27 – You are pioneering something so utterly new and exciting that you've already excited interest, just over the last year or two. It all got faster in 2011 and in 2012 it could accelerate even more. People are up for anything that's different now, in terms of how they travel, read, use the web, learn or teach. Learn those skills you need to take it further.
- H-157 Cancer December 27 – You've taken off like a rocket in the last two years. Even more so if you were born in the first three days of your Cancer zodiac sign. Whatever your birthday, you are now blazing a trail for something radical, new and different in your chosen field. Or maybe your chosen field is an alternative lifestyle! Whatever. The universe speeds it all up today.
- H-158 Gemini December 27 – In order to pursue what is so new and exciting, to you and others, in the name of friendship or group plans, you need the latest and greatest. That means exploring anything or anybody which is a giant leap in progress. It may be online. It may be offline. But you can't really do your thing to the full, until you find the tools, the set-up, the resources.
- H-159 Taurus December 27 – You've come a ridiculously long way since 2009 in terms of what you cover up, or the time you spend alone. It's pretty revolutionary, if you compare then and now. And then there's 2012, which is just days away now! You are only at the very first stages of new ideas, new possibilities. The world wants you to catch up. Or maybe just to lead a little.

- H-160 Aries December 27 – Scientists and multimedia boffins are not solely devoted to your relaunch, renaissance or rebirth at the moment. Oh no, they've got far better things to do – haven't they? But it's odd how you keep stumbling across the newest of the new, when thinking about how you want the world to see you and receive you. And all of it is potentially life-changing.
- H-161 Aquarius December 28 – Lots of Aquarians have planets or asteroids in the sign of Pisces (the next one along from you) and maybe you're in that group. You can check your chart free at www.astro.com. If you do, then the new emphasis on being by yourself, or having time to dream, or imagine makes sense. No planets in Pisces? You'll still feel this, but less intensely.
- H-162 Pisces December 28 – What you've been shown, since 2008, is that networking (horrible word!) and being part of a group is empowering. It's also taught you about the down side – the way that people work out their need to control, or dominate, through 'friendship' or social media. Or by group dynamics. You know so much more, though. And it's time for a new start.
- H-163 Capricorn December 28 – It's really not your style to be pushy or forward. Or to be so 'Me, me, me' about everything. Since 2008, though, the universe has tried to show you how it all works. Because your potential power lies in the way you look, and the person you present yourself to be. A little reluctance about this great truth is natural. But you can make it happen too.
- H-164 Sagittarius December 28 – You could say that your greatest chance of running the world in 2012 lies in running the money, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions. Or maybe you just want to run your world? Or his, hers or theirs? It's okay to have a secret like this at the moment. And you're only human! But is there a cool way? A clever, balanced way?
- H-165 Scorpio December 28 – If you want to have the influence and impact you deserve, then you are going to have to learn from a Gemini. Why? Because those people born in late May through late June have a way with words (or images) and that has to be your way too. It might take a little bit of practice. But the rewards could be great. Communication is your mantra for 2012.
- H-166 Libra December 28 – It's through the family, and the home, that you find your best level of power in 2012. And just the right amount of control. It's a sliding-needle situation, though, as you have only had around three years to experiment with what feels good, and what feels quite wrong to you! It's a big deal now, and there's a lot to think about. But thinking is good...
- H-167 Virgo December 28 – You are already seeing signs of what might 2012 might bring. There's a push for freedom on (total freedom) and radical change, with your financial, property or business world. Yet there is also the temptation of amazing power coming your way, through the world of children, no matter if they are babies, kids or teens. How do you create this?
- H-168 Leo December 28 – It is through being healthy, working hard and serving other people that you will become so powerful next year. The signs are all there now. And everything you need is around you. Because the potential power is so intense, you have probably stood in your own way in 2011. Thus, it's never quite happened with the body, job or course. But now? Wow.
- H-169 Cancer December 28 – An enemy, rival or opponent could empower you now. If you have justice on your side then anything is possible by the end of January. Let's hope you are free of all that, though, and instead your primary question is about a past, present or potential partner. The power of two is pretty high potential now. It feels relentless, sure. But it's the real deal.
- H-170 Gemini December 28 – The house, the possessions, the cash or the flat tells you how much influence and impact you actually have. And you can and will gain more, hopefully the right way (!) in 2012. You don't have to go all Dragon's Den or Property Ladder about it. You can keep this upfront, simple, fair. Those two or three-way agreements must be truly balanced.
- H-171 Taurus December 28 – The Pluto cycle you are now experiencing with books, journeys, foreign nationalities, different cultures, the internet, universities or other places of learning is so intense. It probably feels relentless at the moment. But you are also discovering how this all works. When you devote yourself to expanding your knowledge or passing it on, it's so powerful.
- H-172 Aries December 28 – Just remember, there is power in working a system. It may feel intense, in terms of what is going on with your ambitions, mission or position. Unless you accept the cosmic challenge, though, you'll never really see the rewards. Climbing to the top is what it's all about. Just like a Capricorn would. How else did Kate Moss or Kate Middleton do it, hmmm?
- H-173 Aquarius December 29 – Anything which you do in secret, deliberately concealing it from other people, has some kind of power over you at the moment. And yet it also gives you a bit of power too. That's what your horoscope is saying. Right now it's all becoming so much more obvious. Almost as if a spotlight was swinging across the shadows. It's useful. Look closely.
- H-174 Pisces December 29 – Everyone is in the same boat at the moment. There have been real issues about power plays and over-controlling behaviour in 2011 and now it's all being examined and exposed. You too! It will be a far better year ahead, in terms of your social life or group commitments, once everything is sorted out. So this is the first step. Look and keep looking.
- H-175 Capricorn December 29 – Anything which is all 'front' about you (like Twitter, or other social media) has to be addressed, the same as everything else. It's quite true that your personal style or personality projection is the key to what you want next year. But first you need to spend around four weeks figuring out what became so unbalanced. And why it happened, too.
- H-176 Sagittarius December 29 – The good news is, over the next four weeks, you will successfully tackle the financial, business or property question which has so far lingered, but never been resolved. It's a great time to stand back from yourself, and examine your behaviour as an outsider would. Did you do anything in 2011 which could be called over-controlling? Fix it!
- H-177 Scorpio December 29 – A person or organisation dedicated to communication strongly influenced your destiny in 2011. This individual or entity took over. Perhaps we're talking about a Gemini here, or an organisation which launched in June. Whatever the horoscope, it's time to face this, and sort it out. Your power lies in communication too. But there must be a major repair.
- H-178 Libra December 29 – Now you are seeing the way others react, or give feedback, to the way your family operates. Or maybe this is about your share household, your live-in partner or your neighbours. Seeing it from the outside is really useful because you have important discussions and decisions waiting in January. Something or someone is way out of line. It's repair time.

- H-179 Virgo December 29 – Sex leads to pregnancy (or not) and that was part of your story this year. And then there is your godchild. Or young relatives. Or all those kids or teenagers in your world. Now that the Sun is dazzling us all with its light, you can see so clearly what was hidden from view before. Who or what took over? For four more weeks, you'll be fixing this.
- H-180 Leo December 29 – Anybody or anything which takes over your time, or even your health, has to be challenged. You are now being shown, so clearly, about the real impact of particular people or organisations on the way you live your life. This is about the hours, the daily routine and how you feel and look physically. Whatever or whomever dominated must be faced, now.
- H-181 Cancer December 29 – Take a deep breath, because in around four weeks from now, the complication and intensity of the situation will be over. Right now, you have everything to gain by looking at what is now so obvious, about the way things really operate with your former, current or potential partner. Or with an enemy. And what needs to be done about it, too.
- H-182 Gemini December 29 – Everything is now exposed and obvious, in terms of the money, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions. This is useful. You need to analyse this and then say your piece, or put the numbers down. Logic is your great friend. There have been power plays here, to be sure, but the second half of January is a great time to talk. And talk!
- H-183 Taurus December 29 – A good way to proceed now, is to look at the set-up, or 'system' which exists around your life at university, or with other nationalities, or with travel. Even with publishing. Everything has a structure, no matter if it was formally built or not. So what is it about that structure that got you, he, she or they to this point? Lessons available.
- H-184 Aries December 29 – How does power really operate in your organisation? Or in your university? Everything is now open for all to see. It's an excellent moment to review your own way of working, or studying, or managing in 2011. It's also a useful point to examine the attitudes and personalities of others. And the system! What needs to change? How can you contribute to it?
- H-185 Aquarius December 30 – You will have a much clearer, sharper picture of who you are, how you project your personality, how you really look (and how you want to look) just before or after your birthday. The most mixed-up cycle of your life is ending and you will finally get the clear communication, firm rules and solid, common-sense plans you need. And now? Be careful.
- H-186 Pisces December 30 – You are ruled by Neptune, the planet associated with the ocean. You are famous (or notorious) for losing yourself in situations, spaces and headspaces (!) where there are no firm rules or boundaries. Sometimes you do this just by daydreaming. Sometimes you may do it by drinking (hic). What you need now, though, is big reality in your fantasy.
- H-187 Capricorn December 30 – A few years ago you were living in the unreal world, where money, houses, flats, shopping or business was concerned. Even now, you can still return to that world. It has no relationship with what is actually there! Yet it's a lovely escape, too. Only you can decide what's what, and who is who. Wait until after February 3 for a clear picture.
- H-188 Sagittarius December 30 – The internet (or tinternet as Paul Weller once called it) moves so fast, it confuses everybody. And whatever happened to rules, especially with social media? What's happening now is a useful mini-lesson. Because, even if you don't even own a computer or have your own ISP, the web's cobwebs are influencing your life. Keep it real. Keep it clear!
- H-189 Scorpio December 30 – You are being tested at the moment, but in a useful way. The Universe is showing you a familiar scenario. The vague possibility of a not-quite-real, but fascinating new story, in connection with how you live, or where you live. Or maybe with the family. Fortunately you've learned too much from prior mistakes to just walk into this. Give it time!
- H-190 Libra December 30 – Escaping into the world of storybook 'stories' has been a great way to distract yourself over the last few years. Many of those stories have involved babies, children or teenagers. Your own, or other people's. Sometimes the stories have just been about sex. In any case, fuzzy notions and wistful visions must be tested. Sad but true. Give it five weeks!
- H-191 Virgo December 30 – Some of your vague notions about work, or university life, or volunteering have turned out to be far too unrealistic, and the last few years have taught you a few lessons. Maybe that applies to your daily routine, too, and what you eat, drink or put into your body. The blind alleyways of recent years are useful now. They say "Common sense is Queen."
- H-192 Leo December 30 – Something is very far from being real, or even realistic, with a man or woman who pushes your emotional buttons. It's all there in your head, or his...or hers. Beyond that, nothing will really be valid, long-term, until you are into the second week of February. From that point you will be able to see this person and the situation, so very clearly. Worth a wait.
- H-193 Cancer December 30 – Boundaries have been lost all over the place in the last few years, and the financial, property or business situation has never really been well defined. Lines have been crossed. Clarity has gone out of the window. For all that, though, you occasionally get what seems to be a Dream Come True. Here's another one. Maybe. Check after February.
- H-194 Gemini December 30 – You've taken trips (literally) over the last few years which have fired other people's imagination. Or maybe you've just taken head trips, so to speak – fascinating journeys as a student, teacher, reader, writer, ideas person or woman of the world. Now you get to choose again. Will you wait and see, to test if this is realistic, or just waddle straight in?
- H-195 Taurus December 30 – You've taken a long and winding road in your professional life, your time as a student or your role as a volunteer. Some episodes in the last few years were worth it, even though they confused you (and everybody else). Some were just very...muddy. Now there's another little possibility for you. What will you do? Tip: Wait until after February 3rd!
- H-196 Aries December 30 – You can't exactly say this is new. Over the last few years you've taken all kinds of mini magical mystery tours with friends – or groups. Some have been a good case of the blind leading the blind (or the blonde). Others have been worth it for the total escape from the real world they offered, and the way they captivated others. This time? Give it time!
- H-197 Aquarius December 31 – Before you swim into a new financial, business or property situation for 2012, pay attention to the little signs and clues you have been shown over the last six weeks. To avoid chaos next year, promise yourself (right now) that you will check the rules, conditions, boundaries and 'understandings' very carefully. Then kick back and have fun.

- H-198 Pisces December 31 – Ops and Proserpina (two important asteroids) are in your home and family zone right now. So when it comes to the house, the family, the flatmates or the flat – you can see a big light on the horizon. There is also an important process of negotiation going on. Or someone will play the go-between. Hope is a good thing. So keep hoping, through to 2012.
- H-199 Capricorn December 31 – One thing you can leave behind in 2011 (and would probably have liked to leave behind in 2010 and 2009) is confusion over your finances. Fortunately this cycle is almost at an end. You can read more about it in your Cosmo horoscope for the year ahead. Tonight, though, just promise yourself that you won't repeat a mistake from the chaotic past!
- H-200 Sagittarius December 31 – Something you may want to watch out for in 2012 is the possibility of confusion with a family member, flatmate or live-in partner. It's in the air now, as the future calls to the present. Rather than be led, in the most subtle way, into this situation, you may want to start clarifying now. With care this can be a wonderful new cycle for you.
- H-201 Scorpio December 31 – You will be on much firmer ground in 2012, thanks to a different atmosphere with your live-in partner, your flatmate or your family. The uncertainty about who belongs where, or what fits in where, will vanish. You may feel this intuitively tonight. Some part of you is already reminding you not to repeat previous mistakes. For more see your 2012 stars.
- H-202 Libra December 31 – Librans shine when they are in a true partnership, but it has been hard to co-create that magical balancing act over the last few years, thanks to confusing Neptune in your house of sex (not to mention pregnancy and step-children!) The good news is, Neptune is going. Tonight, though, make sure you don't cross any more wobbly lines!
- H-203 Virgo December 31 – It's that one night of the year that gets you thinking about your former, current or potential lover. And yet there's something new going on. You might call it, an awareness of the future. And the potential for confusion that lies ahead in 2012. It won't really be obvious until just before Valentine's Day. But you can do a lot to keep it away, right now.
- H-204 Leo December 31 – It's funny how the future calls to the present. And there's a long call from 2012 to you tonight, in terms of the business, the house, the money, the possessions or the flat. You're being shown something that will either be a great escape from the boring real world – or an epic piece of chaos, owing to lack of rules. Read more in your 2012 Cosmo stars.
- H-205 Cancer December 31 – You are leaving 2011 behind tonight, and there will be an immediate difference with the house, the money (or lack of it), the flat or the business. It may take a few weeks to kick in, but you are about to enter a much more realistic, practical phase of your life. It's definitely in the air now. Read more about it in your 2012 Cosmo horoscope.
- H-206 Gemini December 31 – You're being shown the (potential) future before it happens, in a glimpse of 2012 tonight. To see the full story, read your year-ahead Cosmo horoscope. For now, though, ask yourself why a little voice in your head is telling you to be much firmer about what's realistic (and what is not) with your career or life at university. Where are the boundaries?
- H-207 Taurus December 31 – You can read all about the big career or university change coming, in your 2012 Cosmo horoscope. But as you celebrate New Year, you'll probably feel the change to come. For the first time in a long time, you're actually thinking 'Is this realistic?' – and that's the breakthrough you always needed. You'll never get quite so lost in the ga-ganess again!
- H-208 Aries December 31 – You can read the full lowdown on what 2012 holds in the special Cosmo feature. But you'll have a taste of the future by New Year's Eve. Essentially, you're being tested with the same old friend or network of people as before. Or the same fuzzy situation, but with different names and faces. Now, more than ever, this has to have serious boundaries!
- H-209 Aquarius January 3 – If you're hitting the January sales for items that will make your home feel bigger and better, you're in the right place, at the right time. Maybe your priority is moving, or reshuffling flatmates, or negotiating a different situation with a family member. In all cases luck is on your side. And have you checked property prices online? Or interest rates? Hmm!
- H-210 Pisces January 3 – You know just how enormous an idea could be, or at least a great channel to express your words or opinions. Maybe new technology is involved. Maybe it's just you – but you would be mad to pass up an opportunity like this. The emotions always rule with Pisces, though. So it's time to find out who and what makes you feel most utterly secure.
- H-211 Capricorn January 3 – You are in a high risk pregnancy cycle now, according to your astrological chart, and if unplanned pregnancy is not on your schedule, better check that Moon overhead – it's in Taurus, which is your most fertile sign. All kinds of things are happening with the babies, children or teens around you, though. And it's all good. And so meant to be, too!
- H-212 Sagittarius January 3 – The question has to be asked, are you working or living? Because there's about to be a lot more living in your working. In astrology, the Sixth House of your chart (where all the lucky opportunities are now) isn't just about schedules and diaries. It's also about how you feel physically – how you sleep, exercise, eat, drink. And it's all improving!
- H-213 Scorpio January 3 – You are now in a position to create a bigger partnership with the person who has come this far with you. It could be altogether richer and more meaningful, with signs now. If you are unhappy there is a way out, or a way through, which was not there before. Single? Well, Scorpio lady, you're going to have to try very hard to stay that way in 2012!
- H-214 Libra January 3 – Between now and Thursday you will see how important it is to feel comfortable and emotionally secure about what, on the face of it, could be big stuff. Your money, house, business interests, flat or possessions are at the heart of developments designed to take you higher, further, faster. But only you can figure out where needs are genuinely met.
- H-215 Virgo January 3 – Someone who has big issues around being a mother, or being 'in' a particular family, is crossing your path. He or she is part of the luck and growth story now unfolding with a trip, move, book, website or course. Or even a totally different nationality. You'll see more of what is possible around Sunday and Monday. And it's just the start of a big, big year.
- H-216 Leo January 3 – What's at the top of your mountain? You may want to star in The Sound of Music. Or climb Everest. Or just climb to the top of your profession or company. Every Leo woman has a big personal agenda right now. There is no point in going higher (which you will) unless it feels safe, though. And comfortable. And cosy. And that's why today is so important.

- H-217 Cancer January 3 – The Moon, your ruler, joins Jupiter, the planet of opportunity and improvement, in the most sociable sector of your horoscope now. This is where you derive greater meaning from a friendship or group, but also discover new people who bring their travel experiences or amazing world view to your life. It's a great time to join a club, team or society.
- H-218 Gemini January 3 – There's never been a better time to have counselling or therapy. Or whatever passes for that! Between now and June (and especially this week) you are in the happy position of being able to learn more about yourself, on the inside. And grow, spiritually. It may be yoga, it may be meditation, it may be keeping a diary. But it's time for Me Time.
- H-219 Taurus January 3 – The Moon is in Taurus until Thursday, allowing you to explore your feelings about your public profile, your appearance and your name. It's time to rebrand, Brand Taurus. A genuine opportunity will come your way over the weekend, through to Monday. And there will be more to come in 2012. You need to feel at home with it all, though. So take a look.
- H-220 Aries January 3 – What does it mean, when astrologers say Jupiter is in Taurus? Or the Moon is in Taurus? Well, both are true this week, and by Sunday-Monday you should be feeling more optimistic about money, mortgages, business interests, the lease or investments, than you have for ages. Opportunities knock. And sometimes they jump up and down and wave!
- H-221 Aquarius January 4 – If someone (or something) is baffling you, then it's time to act. You have let situations like this slide under your nose before, over the years. It's like letting a gas leak through a gap in the window. There truly is something gassy about the person, group or just the situation. It's subtle. But if it builds up it can make you woozy. Stop that leak!
- H-222 Pisces January 4 – When Neptune is in Aquarius (one sign behind you) it's very easy to let confusion enter your life. Because you are the only witness, and what goes on is so secret or deliberately covered-up, there is no second opinion from the outside. That means it's easier for you to be lulled into this rather baffling state of befuddlement! Solution? Keep it real.
- H-223 Capricorn January 4 – Try to rein people, organisations or situations in. The money, possessions, house, business or flat needs to be kept pretty controlled, as others are being vague, or flakey or maybe downright out of order. Instead of going cross-eyed and letting it pass, do something about it. That way February will be even more rewarding than it looks now.
- H-224 Sagittarius January 4 – Don't roll your eyes too much. Just because you seem to have had communication confusion forever in your life (online or offline) you might assume this is the way it will always be. Relax! Within four weeks this cycle ends for good. And a lot of what you will be doing in February is restoration, repair, rejuvenation. For now, just keep it together.
- H-225 Scorpio January 4 – The person, the place or the situation has just crossed a line for you. And it's affecting how you feel about the house, flat, household or family. Because you keep getting repeat scenarios like this all the time you might assume this is the way it's going to be. Wrong! The cycle breaks in February. Just contain this (or them) as much as you can now.
- H-226 Libra January 4 – It will be better in February. Right now you are experiencing the last gasp of the most muddling cycle of your life, at least in terms of intimate relationships, and other people's children, and contraception, and related matters (like kids' needs in general). Just let things flop around a bit. A mega-healing and repair process will arrive within four weeks.
- H-227 Virgo January 4 – You Virgo women need your daily routine. It's a mixture of work, lifestyle, what to eat, what to drink, how to sleep, how to exercise (or not!) For the last few years though all you've had is one wave of confusion after another. And here's another one! Never mind. You'll cruise on through. And your reward is February, when your life firms up and clears up.
- H-228 Leo January 4 – Don't worry too much about what is happening with your former, current or potential partner. Or even someone who is against you. This is January, the season of flakiness. It all gets sorted out in February and it will feel like someone cleaned your windscreen. I'm not kidding. After years of peering and groping for what's 'real' – it really will be real.
- H-229 Cancer January 4 – Particular people or organisations involved with your money, business interests, house, flat or possessions are (quite frankly) confusing. And maybe confused. Just do what you can with what you have. Allow for the fact that January will be full of lines that get crossed. But the good news is, from February, it all gets fixed up and sorted out.
- H-230 Gemini January 4 – You thought you had it all figured out with the school, the trip, the person with a foreign background, the university, the book or the website (tick one or two!) And now you're all over the place again, because the person, place, organisation or situation keeps shifting. It's fine. Just allow four weeks for 'surfing' the trends. It improves hugely soon.
- H-231 Taurus January 4 – People who were born under the signs of Aquarius, Pisces or Aries may be confusing you at work or university now. Or maybe they just have the wobbly planet Neptune in a strange position in their horoscope! Just remember, February will sort everything out. There needs to be a big repair job done here. January is about discovering the priorities.
- H-232 Aries January 4 – Even though your friend, or the group, may be confusing you at the moment (some people have no idea what lines they are crossing), there are easier times ahead. February is going to sort out an awful lot. There is a healing, mending or 'fixing' process that needs to take place. January is really about examining who and what you need and why.
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- H-245 Pisces January 6 – You have seen the future, in terms of your money, house, possessions, business interests or apartment. You may still be dealing with deep, background concerns about finance and lifestyle as a whole. But you have also tuned into a radical, even revolutionary, way of handling things. Don't be surprised if in about ten years other people start copying you.
- H-246 Aquarius January 6 – Communication in all its forms is there to be reinvented. You are often the first to sense change in the air which is why you've headed straight for a particular kind of technology, or a specific approach to words and images. Your planetary ruler Uranus is showing you the way to the future. This early experiment is great. But you'll take it even further.
- H-247 Capricorn January 6 – It's a wonder that nobody else has tried to do, what you are doing. But they haven't, and that's why you were moved to do something quite radical, in terms of the old home or family set-up. It may be your revolutionary reinterpretation of the kitchen. Or your innovative approach to sharing. You were right, though. And you'll do more in 2012.
- H-248 Sagittarius January 6 – There is a planet now operating at full force in your Fifth House of sex and Dad-dating. This same area of your chart also rules your kids, if you have any, and your godchildren or young relatives. Finally, it's about the next younger generation as a whole. You're being shown that you were right to try something so different. And it's exciting!
- H-249 Scorpio January 6 – You can either do what everyone else is doing, in terms of your job, university life or volunteer role – or take the leap. Well, it looks as if you took the leap and now you are seeing just how exciting everything can be, when you experiment. The thing is, anything new or radically different is going to appeal to people who feel just the same as you do.
- H-250 Libra January 6 – Your intuition was telling you to go for it, in terms of your former, current or potential partner. Or even someone against you. Your intuition was right. And there's more excitement where that came from! Over the next year or so, you will be using your new-found confidence in your own radical attempts, to try even more options. It's just so liberating.
- H-251 Virgo January 6 – You tried something new and different with finance, business, the house, the possessions or the flat. You did it even though you have deep, ongoing concerns about what will happen day-to-day with your money and lifestyle. And now the universe is rewarding you. You are being shown that new experiments are right and that you can develop this too.
- H-252 Leo January 6 – The 'vive la revolution!' planet Uranus is in your Ninth House of websites, courses, classes, journeys and international faces. You were quite right to do what you did. It involved a total departure and naturally, not everyone is going to get it. But do look into even more brilliant ways of spinning what you are doing. One change leads to another.
- H-253 Cancer January 6 – Your little experiment with work, university life or volunteering has paid off, and you can now see why following your instincts and going off the beaten track is a great idea. What you are doing is original and that is partly why it appeals. The 'revolution in the head' planet Uranus is encouraging you to do it your way. But others feel just the same, too.
- H-254 Gemini January 6 – Well, you weren't expecting this! But the excitement about such a new way of handling your social life, friendships or group involvements is growing. Your instincts were right. The more you open up to the mood around you (the zeitgeist) and tune in, the better the results. You are reading people the right way. And they want change too. Good!

- H-255 Taurus January 6 – The Fifth House of your horoscope is where astrologers look for trends affecting sex, contraception and your feelings about dating Dads. It's also where children or teens, as a whole come up. What's happening now requires a nice, long-term view of 2012. Not a five-minute response. Burn some energy off with a good, long, thoughtful winter walk!
- H-256 Aries January 6 – Stay cool, calm and collected about work, university or volunteer work concerns. And this applies to any health issue preventing you from working. The idea is to use the energy blast you are receiving, wisely and effectively. If you just allow the energy to 'run' you then the emotions may be too high. It may help to have a strategy, military style.
- H-257 Aquarius January 8 – Any remaining confusion about your appearance or public profile will vanish in just under four weeks. It has been going on for so many years that you have learned to live with the situation. For now, though, have the satisfaction of taking control and organising this part of your life. There is nothing and nobody which is too much for you!
- H-258 Pisces January 8 – Mars in your opposite sign of Virgo is teaching you a lot about timing, tolerance and tact with a man or woman who is at the centre of the emotional heat. The astrological weather is very different at the moment. There may seem to be less time or less patience. Don't be misled, though. Put yourself in his or her shoes. Now, how do things feel?
- H-259 Capricorn January 8 – A lack of communication (straight talking, too many assumptions) is the usual reason for financial fog. Or confusion over a house, flat, business or precious item. When the air is full of question marks, rather like a cartoon or a comic, then the picture always seems more muddling than it actually is. Pop the question marks and get some answers.
- H-260 Sagittarius January 8 – It's easy to feel at a loss when faced with online (or offline) communication fog. But just like real fog, all you need is a torch or a lighthouse. Then work your way through it. Also like real fog, this is going to clear. But do have a look at your online life or your phone. Because something or someone may have snuck in at some point. Find out more?
- H-261 Scorpio January 8 – Do all you can to clear up the confusion surrounding a family member, house, flatmate, home improvement or apartment. Once you identify the real source of the issue (and you may have to do a bit of analysis here) you can quickly move things around and get them back into line. Keep doing this and from February, the 'What?' issue goes.
- H-262 Libra January 8 – In just under four weeks you will have a 'straight lines' existence again, in terms of sex and where it might lead in your life. And this applies to your niece, nephew or godchild too – or the kids you work with. Straight lines are great. You have forgotten what they look like because it's been wavy gravy for years now. But your chart is cooking. Stay tuned.
- H-263 Virgo January 8 – Work, university life or volunteering needs to be put on firmer ground immediately. The swirling patterns in your horoscope describe layer upon layer of confusion if not. As a woman who is well-known for her grasp of time and motion, you may as well put that to good use, with this situation. And put it into words or insist that others do it for you.
- H-264 Leo January 8 – Your former, current or potential partner is standing knee-deep in a swirling fog of mild to moderate confusion or semi-chaos. And this goes to anyone against you too. This will stop by February. For now, if you can try to keep everything recorded or written down, at least it helps. And go back to the words, too. They're actually concrete.
- H-265 Cancer January 8 – Neptune in Aquarius is currently baffling you but it won't last. Within weeks the money, the house, the flat or the business will seem straighter and clearer than it has for years. The issue has been wobbly identity all round. You, she, he or they have simply lost the plot when it comes to knowing what's realistic or even real! But what a brilliant lesson.
- H-266 Gemini January 8 – Until February is here you won't really have the full picture, or the clear picture, about the trip away, the change of location, the international face, the publishing project or the academic issue. Neptune really is blowing an awful lot of smoke from his celestial smoke-machine, and it's looking like a heavy metal concert. Best tip? Put/get it in writing.
- H-267 Taurus January 8 – Get it in writing. And go back to what was in writing. That way you can find your way through the fog which surrounds a career or university matter. Or your volunteer role. In any case, in just under four weeks you will be in a totally different phase of your life. The good thing about this situation is you know how to avoid any past mistakes.
- H-268 Aries January 8 – It's quite good to pin down friends or groups in writing, because then you can physically see what you have to work with. Or not, as the case may be! Operating this way reduces the chance of confusion. And with Neptune now in your zone of social media, gal pals, platonic male friends, teams, clubs and societies – well. It all needs to be solidified.
- H-269 Aquarius January 9 – One of the reasons your situation has become so intense, is partly down to the weather. You're practically kettling yourself these days, and that's why your secrets, your time alone or your very private self has become central. By Friday there's a real breakthrough. There is a conversation you must have with yourself or a confidante, then.
- H-270 Pisces January 9 – The Full Moon falls in your Fifth House of pregnancy, sex, babies, children and teenagers. Enough said. By Tuesday the feelings have passed. In their place, you get to the real issue, which is your friend. Or the collection of people now dominating your thoughts. Communication is about to take place, by Friday, on a level not possible for 12 months.
- H-271 Capricorn January 9 – The Moon in your opposite sign of Cancer reveals all kinds of needs, in terms of your former, current or future lover. That mood passes by tomorrow, but the real issue is you! This is about how you appear to other people. Fortunately Friday will sort a great deal out for you. The fact is, power or control needs to be moved around, and shared.
- H-272 Sagittarius January 9 – This is the Full Moon you had to have, in terms of the money, the valuable items, the business, the house or the flat. Two factors will help you with the discussion or paperwork that's coming near Friday. One is the natural leader, who inspires so many imitators at work or university. The other is your determination to hit a goal that helps others.
- H-273 Scorpio January 9 – There is someone in your circle of friends, or the group around you, best described as a true leader. Others copy this impressive person. He or she will play a useful part in what you're now dealing with. And by Friday, so much will be sorted out. If you commit to a way forward which gives everyone control, on some level, then it will truly work.

- H-274 Libra January 9 – Others are peering at the house, the family, the share household, the domestic situation or the flat. Meanwhile, you have certain needs when it comes to your career, volunteer role or life at university. The jigsaw puzzle of your life isn't fitting! Good news, though. By Friday, it will. With effort you'll be proud of an outcome which passes inspection.
- H-275 Virgo January 9 – Nobody really digs a Full Moon. It's too complicated! And you have ongoing issues about past, present or potential lovers. And maybe young relatives or godchildren, or just kids in general. The good news is, the emotion vanishes tomorrow. And by Friday you can use all your famous logic and methodical thinking to make a choice which dazzles others.
- H-276 Leo January 9 – You are aware of how it all looks, in terms of your job, university situation or volunteer role. And that makes your situation challenging. There are other factors helping you, though. And by Friday, you will be in a position to talk or write, and be heard. And also, of course, to get the facts you need. You can dazzle everyone by that stage. Shine on.
- H-277 Cancer January 9 – You have certain feelings and needs, where your public profile or appearance is concerned. But there is something rather public happening with your former, current or potential lover. Or even your enemy! Let the Full Moon emotion pass. And take what you discover into an important discussion or e-mail (or letter) which is coming near Friday.
- H-278 Gemini January 9 – It's all about the money, honey. Or the business, the house, the valuable items or the flat. This Full Moon puts you in touch with your emotions. You can then let the feelings pass, by Tuesday, ready for a crucial discussion or piece of paperwork near Friday. The news or information you need is on the way. And that helps you fathom a more intense issue.
- H-279 Taurus January 9 – This Full Moon is about the need to keep up appearances as a traveller, student, writer, teacher, publisher – or woman of the world, dealing with other nationalities. Forget appearances, though. What really matters is the conversation, letter or e-mail near Friday. And most of all, an unusual chance to be read or heard – and genuinely connect.
- H-280 Aries January 9 – A Full Moon in your career, university and volunteer zone finds you pulled in two directions, or dealing with a push-pull situation coming from other people. This is perfectly fine. On Friday the 13th (which happens to be fortunate, if intense) you and others will have the necessary information, and at last, the proper communication. Time to talk or write.
- H-281 Aquarius January 10 – Stand firm on cool facts. This applies no matter how secret things have to be. Or how much this is about you, being alone. The pure logic will save you and anyone else who happens to be involved. Just lick the pencil and write the points down, one by one. E-mail is too rapid, and so is Twitter. But good old handwriting sometimes saves the day.
- H-282 Pisces January 10 – Pisceans are ruled by Neptune, the planet of the ocean and all water – so often, they soak other people's feelings up like a sponge. Time to stop being porous, fish girl! You are taking on everything and everybody and it has to stop. Imagine yourself in a shower of white light, then seal that light in a balloon. Now, to the facts. And only the facts.
- H-283 Capricorn January 10 – One thing that will really help you in this situation is the return of clarity and normality, to your money situation. Or the house, flat or business. That's just three weeks away now. In the meantime, even if life seems to be all emotion (for you or others) and no common sense, relax. What's already happening is a wakey-wakey moment. At last!
- H-284 Sagittarius January 10 – You're actually dealing with rows of numbers, or sums, or other additions and subtractions. Therefore you can remove the emotion with a pair of silver tongs and drop it on a cold flannel. Passion is fine, and it's what makes us feel alive. But it's time it took a back seat to common sense. Very, very soon this will be about facts. Or figures.
- H-285 Scorpio January 10 – This is such an interesting time for you. Now, ask yourself who or what is in control. Or dominating. Or overwhelming you on any level. The true answer is, yourself. Or at least that part of your heart, soul and mind which is just surrendering. Go back to logic. This isn't really your thing. You're a pulsating, passionate female! But yet, it will so save you.
- H-286 Libra January 10 – As an air sign you like to breathe oxygen and stand back from situations with a little fresh air between you and all the (waft, waft) feeling. And the strong and passionate emotion. Now, this should help enormously between now and February. It's your home, I know. Or your family. Or those people you live with. But still, let's be a little Dr Spock about this!
- H-287 Virgo January 10 – You love a reasonable case. You dig it when the facts can be lined up, in opposite margins, on a page. (Even if it's just in your head). Now, where did all that go? Last year was nuts, in terms of huge, passionate feeling (for you, him, her or them). And so much was at stake, and still is. But right now it's purely about what makes sense. Perfectly so.
- H-288 Leo January 10 – Enough already with the feelings. You are too much of a born leader (and mentor, and example-setter) to be sunk in mere emotion for very long. So far it's all been about the emoting, in terms of work, university life or volunteering. And even your lifestyle as a whole! Time for some hard facts to come in. Brilliant, cool logic is your best friend right now.
- H-289 Cancer January 10 – Logic will come to the rescue. There is buried emotion here. And some of it is surfacing. That's what happens when you have love in your life. (Or if you ever had it). It's also what happens when there's a deep kind of rivalry or enmity. But the brilliant little planet Mercury is rallying round. And this is about facts. Not emotions. And it will so help you!
- H-290 Gemini January 10 – There is no point in personalising this too much. Sure, it's deeply uncomfortable and way out of alignment, because a flawed financial, property or business picture always is. (Or maybe this is about your possessions). Still, all you can say is that it's time to take a step back, about 100 miles, and see this from a logical distance. At last.
- H-291 Taurus January 10 – What you are reading into the situation with travel, international faces, publishing, the internet or education is this – someone (or a whole group of them) dominates. This is not actually the case. Not truly. What has dominated is a big passion. What now needs to replace this is common sense. Phew! Practical thinking gets you everywhere.
- H-292 Aries January 10 – A bit of discussion at some point would really help. Either with yourself, he, she – or they. Your mission, ambition and position can't really reward you fully, until there's a conversation (or e-mail) about what's required. Ask yourself what has been taking over since last year. What has dominated you? What feels way out of balance? That's the big issue.

- H-293 Aquarius January 11 – If you hear popping sounds all around you, it's the gentle bursting of big bubbles of nothing. Daydreaming, wishful thinking, playing 'let's pretend' and all the rest of it has been an engaging way for you, he, she or they to spend the last few weeks. But it's all very confusing and has gotten you precisely nowhere. This cycle ends very soon!
- H-294 Pisces January 11 – You seem to have been led on by someone or something. Or even placed trust in a person or situation which has let you down. Some of it is because you have true faith. The rest may be because you are a wishful thinker by nature, or a born novelist! Just remember, in the middle of all this, there is something or someone with lasting potential.
- H-295 Capricorn January 11 – You will find February and beyond a huge relief, as after years of being led up the garden path with money, business, houses, possessions or flats – you are on the straight track again. Right now you just have no idea who or what to put your faith in. Total fiction (in your own head, or someone else's) is to blame for some of it. The future? Better!
- H-296 Sagittarius October 11 – You were 99% imagination and 1% inspiration about a phone, computer, website, presentation, media project, publishing idea or other Communications HQ matter. Maybe you were even learning a language. Now you realise how much was just in your head. But that's cool. Because in there (still) is a possibility for the future. Check in later.
- H-297 Scorpio January 11 – Just remember you have been through something so similar before, in terms of the family, the house, your flatmates or the flat. And it all worked out in the end. Still, you've been put on a steep learning curve about the essentially dazed and confused nature of human beings. Or even the 'wobbly reality' of your home. It's over soon. I promise.
- H-298 Libra January 11 – Let things and people play themselves out. You still don't really know who is who, or what is what. And while there are no road signs, rules, highways or by-laws in your very personal or emotional life, just go with it! You can't let too much chaos in, of course. There is much you can do to contain this. But trust in the future. February brings reality.
- H-299 Virgo January 11 – With about three weeks to go, Neptune in Aquarius is still giving you a run for your money with work, university life or your volunteer role. Since when were people or situations so flakey or hard to trust? Still, you should realise this is the end of a cycle. And in the meantime there is one small but potent fantasy which may become a reality, yet.
- H-300 Leo January 11 – Old partner, current partner or potential partner? Who exactly is muddying the waters for you? Of course it may be more than one person. Just put it down to this. Some men (or women) do not know who they are. This confusion about their own lives and personalities creates confusion for you too. And yet, and yet – the future holds a possible dream.
- H-301 Cancer January 11 – A few bubbles are popping, in terms of the money, the house, the possessions, the business or the flat. And nobody likes seeing rainbow bubbles pop, even if by February you'll realise just how empty they were! For the moment, though, there is a definite maybe about the future. You'll have to wait, though, to find out if this/he/she/they is truly real.
- H-302 Gemini January 11 – You are allowed to have one daydream, anyway, about a trip, move, book, website, course or foreign person. The rest isn't dreamy at all. If anything it just feels hard to understand or know particularly well. That's perfectly normal for this time of year. And you will be stunned to see how much more sound the situation becomes within weeks.
- H-303 Taurus January 11 – Well, just put it down to this. People are confused and confusing. But in among the aquarium you call your job, or your university life, there are some bubbles of possibility. You won't know until February. For the moment just keep treading water and trying to control and contain things as much as you can. You'll be on terra firma soon enough.
- H-304 Aries January 11 – If you treat the situation with your friend (or that circle of people) as some kind of scuba-diving expedition then you'll get far more out of January. Then by February and beyond, you'll be on dry land again, able to figure out where you stand, and where everyone else stands too. For now, though, people are fish. Let them swim around a bit.
- H-305 Aquarius January 13 – The world of babies, children or young people will deliver more to you than you imagine, in the final six months of 2012. One situation which relates to this is already forming in your life. New people, places or possibilities (or projects) which arrived at the end of last year are meant to be. So follow the cosmic signs and clues and keep going.
- H-306 Pisces January 11 – You seem to have been led on by someone or something. Or even placed trust in a person or situation which has let you down. Some of it is because you have true faith. The rest may be because you are a wishful thinker by nature, or a born novelist! Just remember, in the middle of all this, there is something or someone with lasting potential.
- H-307 Capricorn January 13 – It looks as though you've had quite enough of living with a particular set of restrictions. Fair enough. It's personal because it affects you (as in 'you, you, you') and it feels very tied to your sense of self or ego. Sometimes life just runs away with you. A lack of time or opportunity has stopped you from halting things and taking control. Now you can.
- H-308 Sagittarius January 13 – A bigger and better future with your partner (or a new partner) is calling you, after June. That might seem like ages away, but if you are shrewd about the 'chance' developments of late last year, and see what is going on this week, you will swiftly realise how much is being put together now. Just show willing. Right time, right place, right future!
- H-309 Scorpio January 13 – A famous postcard was once produced, showing a woman working in a print factory, with the legend 'The freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press.' Now, it may be newspapers, magazines or books which dot the landscape. Or Twitter, Facebook, blogs or websites. Or SMS messages. But at last, Scorpio, you're taking control.
- H-310 Libra January 13 – You will be travelling, studying, writing, teaching or publishing at the biggest and best level for years, soon. Count forward to June in your mind, and see what is being set up for you now. Nothing and nobody is random in astrology, and some of the green lights you have seen in late 2011 are now urging you forward. Just keep going, Libra.
- H-311 Virgo January 13 – You are in a long-running cycle when babies, children or teenagers will make you powerful. By power, I mean – more influential, more respected, with the ability to make a substantial difference in people's lives. Now, is this going to be future parenthood, or some kind of career or voluntary involvement? Or something personal? Your call. Your destiny.

- H-312 Leo January 13 – Someone (or something) has been trying to dominate the details of your everyday life, your daily routine, your work or your course. You know about the big, obvious culprit and have already taken steps to sort it out. What you may have missed, though, is the controlling nature of other people or situations. Good news. You can reject this and start again.
- H-313 Gemini January 13 – You will expand and improve your public profile after your birthday, and your name or face will either mean more to people, or become the focus for a whole lot of relaunching. It's too early to call the situation now, but there are some useful people, situations or possibilities floating around. Take full advantage of these and follow them through.
- H-314 Taurus January 13 – You have been shown very clear signs about the right place, person or plan – one which would finally put you in control of your life as a student, writer, publisher or teacher. Or just as a woman of the world, dealing with other cultures or nationalities. How can you resist? Of course it's going to mean changing everything. But surely this is better!
- H-315 Aries January 13 – Something which seems way down on your list (at least in terms of your way with words, or ideas, or technology) will become important after June. The situation is being set up right now, in its earliest stages. People who are generous with their time, hospitality or other gifts (contacts, for example) are meant to be there. Just keep saying yes.
- H-316 Pisces January 14 – Sometimes things creep up on you. Almost without realising it, you have fallen into a situation in your social life, or with your networks, where other people who want ownership and control, have gone too far. Sometimes a radical move is the best answer. Scrutinise 2011, and even early 2012, very carefully. Who or what must be ushered out?
- H-317 Capricorn January 14 – You will be in a better job or course after June, or in a better version of the career or university commitment you want to stick with. Jupiter, the planet of 'the biggest and best' is poised to move into your Sixth House of work and academia. A person who can help you with all this is under your nose right now. And he or she has a lot to offer.
- H-318 Libra January 14 – Some people are just control freaks or takeover queens (or kings). And that's why the situation with your house, flat, share household or family is exactly as it stands now. You are already solving the issues, though. And the nice thing about your horoscope is that it reveals a totally new order in your life. One which gives you a firm sense of control.
- H-319 Virgo January 14 – Whatever is swirling around in the ether at the moment could lead to super success for you. It's very early days, but you are around people, places or possibilities with promise. From June this year, the most beneficial career or university cycle for 12 years kicks off. Nothing comes from nothing, though, so plant those seeds now, and water them too.
- H-320 Leo January 14 – You will have a significantly different social life after June, and be involved with quite a different group of people who have a project in mind. Some of the clues about this will emerge this week, so just follow through. A new friend who appeared in late 2011 opens the door to so much for you, if you are willing to take one step at a time and say 'yes.'
- H-321 Cancer January 14 – Over the last few weeks you have woken up to yet another reality about your partnership. Or your relationship with a former or potential partner. You might call this Reality Check Two. But at least it allows you to make some new choices in your life. The funny thing is, once you commit to those choices, you see just how powerful your life could be.
- H-322 Gemini January 14 – What you might call 'matters of a joint financial nature' (the rent, the credit card, the family inheritance, the business and so on) now looms large. But this is the turning point. You simply cannot let particular people or organisations control you any more. And there are options. By saying a firm no to control freaks, in all their guises, life offers alternatives.
- H-323 Taurus January 14 – The people or situations which can help you make more money (or save it) are just starting to play a more important part in your destiny. Nothing will really happen until after June, but the second half of this year is all about solving problems – and also seizing opportunities to live life on a larger scale. If you appreciate a gesture pay it back now.
- H-324 Aries January 14 – You're being offered a neat swap by the universe. In exchange for positively identifying people (or situations) which have been controlling you, you can leave these behind in favour of stuff which gives you control! It will be empowering to say the least. Of course, you don't get something for nothing. So this will take effort and an action plan.
- H-325 Aquarius January 16 – You will no longer face such a dramatic choice about work, university life or voluntary commitments after February. For the next fortnight, though, you have to factor in very different issues. One is all about the need to have a place in the world, a position and some comfortable advantages. The other is about being free to do just as one wishes...
- H-326 Pisces January 16 – You can't have it all when it comes to travel, study, publishing, teaching, writing or moving. You can't have it all when you're dealing with other cultures either. There is a clear fork in the road. One path you travel alone, but with nobody confining you or co-opting you. The other is very much about belonging, fitting in and feeling safe. And yet...!
- H-327 Capricorn January 16 – You have two very different friends, who connect you to two different social circles. One is single by choice and has no interest in having children. She's more likely to have a dog! The other is very much into the respectability of marriage or de facto domesticity. Over the next two weeks you will navigate this fork in the road. It's quite an education.
- H-328 Sagittarius January 16 – With both Ops and Proserpina in your house of former, current and potential partners, it's clear that there is hope. It may be a few days until the situation comes together, but after a tough time, you will be able to see a promise for the future. It looks as though someone will play the go-between and negotiate his or her way through it all.
- H-329 Scorpio January 16 – The asteroid Aesculapia may be a difficult heavenly body to name – but he is worth remembering. He is now moving through your department of family life, houses, apartments and flatmates. Despite the constant background atmosphere of uncertainty (which vanishes soon) there is someone, or something, about to come back from the brink.
- H-330 Libra January 16 – Intriguing choices about money, business, property or your possessions circle your horoscope. You have constant protection until June, thanks to Jupiter, which will always solve an issue or provide you with a generous cosmic favour. But until February, you must sort out if you are staunchly independent over one question, or tempted by security.

- H-331 Virgo January 16 – Communication in all its forms, from the hi-tech to the spoken word, invites you to figure out a new approach for 2012. It may take you a couple of weeks to really sort things out, no matter if the issue is the internet, computers, phones, your written abilities or just your voice. Are you a free agent by nature or do you want guarantees?
- H-332 Leo January 16 – Your house, flat, family or share household situation is challenging you to decide if you want to do your own thing, in your own time, in your own space – or opt for something more conventional and reassuring. You won't actually have the whole picture sorted until Juno leaves Scorpio right at the end of January but there are choices to make along the way.
- H-333 Cancer January 16 – The decisions you make about contraception, sexual partners (or single life) have a long-term effect now, because it's all tied into bigger questions about your former, current or potential lover. Maybe children are involved, or a hovering question about future pregnancy. By February the choice has been made. Will it be freedom, or the other thing?
- H-334 Gemini January 16 – Your job, your life at university or your voluntary work suggests a choice. You may not know where you stand for another two weeks, though. Juno and Diana, two important heavenly bodies, are suggesting a fork in the road. Only you can figure out if you want to be your own woman, with no ties to anyone or anything, or you'd rather have true security.
- H-335 Taurus January 16 – Your former, current or potential partner is at the heart of big questions. You have to be honest and say there are two kinds of Taurus women. One kind would rather commit to a man because of the status and comfort – not to mention the property or lifestyle gains. Another kind has totally different values and loves her freedom, wildness and oxygen.
- H-336 Aries January 16 – In a couple of weeks you won't have the push-pull feeling about money, houses, businesses or flats (or precious items). At the moment there's a clear option to have comfort, security and prestige – but at a cost to freedom and independence. Meanwhile there's bags of space and autonomy on offer but no guarantees! The dilemma ends by February.
- H-337 Aquarius January 19 – The world of sex, pregnancy, babies, children and sons/daughters looks fraught. Someone, or something, which is all about hope in the face of reality, is here to stay. At least until March. And then it looks way better. In fact, from June, everything you, he, she or they are doing right now, to invest in a better future, will repay you so hugely...
- H-338 Pisces January 19 – Your house, flat, family or flatmate situation will take off in about five months and the final half of 2012 will give you what you are hoping for, as well as stuff you hadn't even imagined was possible. Right now it's all sighing and planning for the future. Trying to make it all better, by investing in tomorrow. Well, Pisces, your instincts are bang on.
- H-339 Capricorn January 19 – You could do with an easier and less complicated life, in terms of your job, daily routine, university life, volunteer role or body. So is it your work or your health? The asteroid Ops tells you better days are coming. And they really are. Her husband, planet Jupiter, who fixes details and provides huge breakthroughs, is here to help within months.
- H-340 Sagittarius January 18 – Oh, for a home life (or a house and flat situation) which is free of complication! Maybe it's someone you live with, share with, or call family. Perhaps it's issues about renting, renovating or owning a place. In all cases, nothing has been as free and easy as you would like. The cycle ends shortly. So think ahead. What would you like to happen next?
- H-341 Scorpio January 19 – So many heavenly bodies in your house of finance, rent, business, possessions and the mortgage. So much time to hope for the best, or struggle with what is actually going on! Still, your astrological chart says you should be sunny side up about this. The more you create, build, sow and plant, the more fabulous your money garden will be in June.
- H-342 Libra January 19 – The world of foreign cultures, travel, online publishing, books, university life or education is challenging you. First of all, it is challenging you to be a total realist about particular people, places or unavoidable situations! Secondly, it is challenging you to believe in a bigger, better, brighter future. And you know what? within four months it's on the way.
- H-343 Virgo January 19 – You are quite understandably concerned about your career, your university situation or your volunteer role. Two things will change everything. One is the end of confusion, and confused people and situations on February 3rd. The other is your own positive thinking. The more you work to create a happy ending, the bigger your chances after June.
- H-344 Leo January 19 – Friends or groups are making you concerned about the future. Not to mention the present. At the same time you are savvy enough to believe in something, or someone, which could be so much bigger and better. Trust in that vision and do all you can to make sure it happens. Your chances of a fantastic end result skyrocket after June – not far away.
- H-345 Cancer January 19 – What is secret or solitary in your life is giving you cause for concern. But you are quite right to believe in a better day, or a happy ending. It is coming, for sure, once Jupiter enters Gemini in June. At the moment, there is a process of negotiation or compromise in the works. This also has its part to play. But it is hope, above all else, that gets you through.
- H-346 Gemini January 19 – You have the asteroids Ops and Proserpina in your sign at the moment. Your appearance, name, public profile, reputation or image is on the way up. You won't see the full benefits until around your birthday. But you are so right to keep hoping. The final six months of the year is a relaunch. Right now you have to be a realist. But do keep hoping/trying.
- H-347 Taurus January 19 – The money, the business, the house, the flat, the stuff – which makes you madly hopeful about the future, at the same time that it reminds you of your all-too-real situation? What if I told you that your hopes were correct? From June, Jupiter, the planet of abundance and opportunity, enters your house of money. This is so on the way to progress.
- H-348 Aries January 18 – A lot of planets are about to become active in the Twelfth House of your horoscope, where it's the hidden depths and mysteries of life that matter more. What people see on the surface, from this point on, is a long way from what will actually be taking place. If you have heavenly bodies in Pisces in your personal chart (check at astro.com) it's big.
- H-349 Aquarius January 20 – The Sun enters Aquarius, your own sign, later today. If today or tomorrow also happen to be your birthday, many happy (solar) returns. That's where the saying comes from – astrology. Whatever your birthday, you are now in the final two weeks of the most baffling cycle for years. How normal will life be when it's over? It's utterly immeasurable.

- H-350 Pisces January 20 – What you have been doing behind closed doors, perhaps even without full consciousness, will now be revealed to you, as it really is. This is an annual event, of course, thanks to the Sun's cycle. But this time it has extra importance. You will soon be going into a clearer, sharper, more focussed, more upfront, more open era of your life. At last!
- H-351 Capricorn January 20 – The effects of the last few years on your approach to money, renting, owning a home or running a business have been subtle. The kind of drip, drip, drip which you hardly notice – or perhaps like creeping fog! When all this stops, so suddenly, in February you will be living in a totally different world. And by tonight, a part of that change is here.
- H-352 Sagittarius January 20 – It looks like being a weekend of 'Oh, right' moments, thanks to a change of pace where your internet life, phone calls or day-to-day communication is involved. Maybe there's a project involving words or images in a significant way too. Nothing happens overnight but you will slowly see that this is part of a longer process of recognition and change.
- H-353 Scorpio January 20 – The Sun moves into Aquarius this afternoon, into your house of family, flatmates, live-in partners, houses, apartments and temporary accommodation. This simple change in the heavens will chime with a slow, creeping awareness of how things must look to outsiders. And this in turn helps the massive alteration which is to come in February.
- H-354 Libra January 20 – In a fortnight's time you will be well on your way to quite a different kind of sexual relationship, if you are in a couple, and on the way to brand new possibilities for love, if you are single. A development later this afternoon, or tonight, helps that long process of change. The people you attract, or the dynamic in the relationship, will ultimately alter.
- H-355 Virgo January 20 – In about two weeks' time you can look forward to much clearer, and perhaps healthier, work-based relationships. Or is the issue at university? It seems as if there are all kinds of reasons why things are constantly unclear, either to you, he, she or they. The clarity comes in stages, beginning late this afternoon when a mirror is held up for you.
- H-356 Leo January 20 – Sharp awareness of how your love life, or battles, must look to other people will come when the Sun enters Aquarius, your opposite sign. There is brand new interest in how things are with your partner, former partner, potential partner – or even the person who is in the red corner while you are in the blue one. It's so useful. It all helps wake you up.
- H-357 Cancer January 20 – Someone else is shining a strong searchlight onto an aspect of your bank account, rent, mortgage, business or lifestyle. This is just the start of an amazing two-week process of change, which will find you starting February with your eyes wide open for the first time in years. Literally, years! At last everyone will soon know where they stand.
- H-358 Gemini January 20 – This is an odd time, because even though there is a lot going on with the journey, move, plan, book, idea or course (or that person from a totally different culture!) you still aren't in the right space. What you actually need, more than anything else, is a bit of clarity. Things will not run in straight lines until the new month begins, but when they do, wow!
- H-359 Taurus January 20 – February is going to feel and look very different to January, and in fact all of last year. It marks the dividing line in your working life, or your time as a student or volunteer. Welcome change does not come out of nowhere, though. The goggles come off slowly, partly thanks to a moment today when you see it all from the outside looking in.
- H-360 Aries January 20 – Once the Sun changes signs at around 4pm you will be in a position to see your friend, or the group, as outsiders do. This is the start of a prolonged period of change, with more 'Aha' moments near Sunday 22nd, Monday 23rd, and a lot of talking after Friday 27th. Then from Friday February 3rd it's a new era. Total clarity, complete sharp awareness!
- H-361 Aquarius January 23 – Mars in Virgo is about to run backwards, and so might a money, business, house or flat question, or an issue about your possessions. That's why you need to keep it as simple as possible. Oh, it would be awfully easy for you, he, she or they to turn this into a battle. But it's not necessary. What you do need is a sound plan, though. One that sticks.
- H-362 Pisces January 23 – A conversation which never did happen, about your friend (or the group) can now take place, with final understanding on Friday. This helps a situation which has been far too emotionally complicated, for far too long. There's nothing like a bit of logic. Is a former, current or potential partner generating a lot of heat? Bring it down. It's easily done.
- H-363 Capricorn January 23 – The New Moon this morning helps you start a process of control and new understanding, with the financial, property or business picture. It's the insight you needed, and it will help you talk further, sign or shuffle some numbers this weekend. By February 3rd you are at the start of something new. With full, clear vision. And some boundaries!
- H-364 Sagittarius January 23 – You were not able to talk or commit in any meaningful way before, and that's why a financial, business, rent or mortgage question hovers. Or maybe it's your possessions. Fortunately Mercury is now on your side, so it's just the facts, ma'am, if you please. Friday brings another chance to talk, sign or probe the numbers just a little further.
- H-365 Scorpio January 23 – If you are moving in time for February, or reshuffling the family or share household, then you will be making a change which gives you more clarity and normality than you have experienced for years. Nothing so dramatic? Today's New Moon is still about a big shift in focus, and it's the house, flat, close relative or flatmate that's in the picture.
- H-366 Libra January 23 – The biggest change in your emotional and personal life for many years is about two weeks away, and today's New Moon is the start of that change. Basically, you have been moving in a different reality for so long that you may have forgotten what reality is! That's what Neptune does to a girl. But conversations or facts ahead, can really help you.
- H-367 Virgo January 23 – This is a great week for identifying what needs to change with work, university life or your volunteer commitment. Or maybe your health prevents you from functioning normally? The New Moon near breakfast should help illuminate the situation. Then you will be ready to talk, sign or just do some research over the weekend. Time for a change.
- H-368 Leo January 23 – Devote today, Saturday and Sunday to focussing hard on people or situations which confuse the picture, in terms of your love life. And even your conflicts or rivalries. See what is actually there and deal with it in an utterly logical way next weekend. This should help you end the most baffling cycle of your life within a fortnight. For now, keep it real.

- H-369 Cancer January 23 – This week should really be devoted to scrutinising just what needs to be cleared up and sorted out, in terms of the money, the house, the possessions, the business or the flat. Anything else may just add to the uncertainty or the lack of clarity. With any luck, that internal choice that feels so right now, helps another leap of progress this weekend.
- H-370 Gemini January 23 – You are coming to the end of a very long, strange trip of many years' duration. It has affected what you can see (or rather, not see) about other cultures or countries, about very big ideas (the kind that get published) and also about the process of learning or teaching. Whatever you do today, make sure it's a clarification. A way of demisting it all.
- H-371 Taurus January 23 – Everything about your career or university life (position, mission, ambition) is now so clear. The way it looks to other people. And the way it feels inside. And there will be news or conversations this weekend. Yet, unless you are consciously making choices which will eliminate previous confusion or chaos, you're not really progressing. So that's the key.
- H-372 Aries January 23 – You may want to make your mind up about a friend or group, and make commitments this weekend. It may even seem like the time is right. But unless you're sorting out confusion (with a view to ending it by February) don't enter into anything new and fuzzy. A long overdue conversation or piece of news about your career or life at university is coming.
- H-373 Aquarius January 27 – Your career, your life at university or your role as a volunteer has been made difficult over the last fortnight. It's all very silly, but now the cycle is ending and you have some intriguing choices between now and early February. You should be able to come and go as you please, as much as the situation allows. And follow your nose.
- H-374 Pisces January 27 – The Ninth House of your horoscope rules books, teachers, students, travel plans, distant regions of the UK and people from other nationalities. Something on this list has been an epic struggle in the last two weeks, although the signs have been there since November. Good news. It's over. You now have room to move. Actually, you can see for miles.
- H-375 Capricorn January 27 – Your social media connections (well, you could hardly call everyone a real friend!) or the groups you are involved with (proper friends) have not been easy lately. Fortunately, your astrological chart now reveals a break in the weather. Perhaps one person is moving off the radar, or just altering her approach. This is about a woman or feminine man.
- H-376 Sagittarius January 27 – You have been keeping it to yourself, of course, but that sensitive matter or 'classified, for my eyes only' part of your life is now easier. Juno, who can be an awkward asteroid to deal with, is moving out of Scorpio. What you cover up or do by yourself is now your business, under your control. And you can experiment and explore as never before.
- H-377 Scorpio January 27 – You should enjoy the path from late January to early February, as the asteroid Diana moves through Scorpio, your own sign. She symbolises freedom without any compromise, and although this has been such an issue for you lately (with a struggle, no doubt) you are now in the clear. You can act as the mood takes you and follow your instincts.
- H-378 Libra January 27 – You felt restricted and, let's face it, a little itchy about a difficult situation affecting the house, money, business, flat or stuff. It may have been the person or just the times you were moving in. Now it's over, what are you going to do with all that freedom? It's going to give you headspace, apart from anything else. And that helps other aspects of life.
- H-379 Virgo January 27 – The written or spoken word, the internet, your phone, the usual listening/hearing issues – it's all been on your mind lately. On a wider level there may have been a concern with the media, education or publishing too. The person or situation which trapped you, or made you so heavily aware of the price you pay for security, is vanishing. You're home free.
- H-380 Leo January 27 – Your house, family, flat or share household situation becomes vastly easier from today, as the epic battle between two totally incompatible people (or two situations which met head-on) is virtually over. The asteroid Diana is now assisting you, and that means action and initiative. Total freedom from any ties that trap you. Tons more room to move.
- H-381 Cancer January 27 – This should come as a relief. Questions about sex, pregnancy or contraception which were so difficult have almost gone. And any concern you had about a child or baby in your world (not your own) or the subject of the next generation, en masse, has gone. What's ahead for February? Enough emotional space to do your own thing. And be yourself.
- H-382 Gemini January 27 – Your lifestyle, which involves everything from feeding the cat, to organising your work schedule, has not been particularly easy to manage lately. This changes from today, as you are moving towards greater freedom and autonomy. The spontaneity you want is coming. You've seen both sides of an issue. And now you simply won't have to worry about it.
- H-383 Taurus January 27 – Juno and Diana were both in your Seventh House in recent weeks, which might explain why your former, current or potential partner created such emotion. Or maybe you had someone against you, for whatever reason. The problem is now over, and over the next few days you should enjoy the sensation of doing what you like, when you like.
- H-384 Aries January 27 – You have moved into a much easier place in terms of money, business, houses, possessions or apartments. The big either-or debate that was taking place (you can either have independence and space OR security and comfort) is disappearing. The asteroid Diana is watching over this area of your destiny now. And she's just all about the lovely freedom.
- H-385 Aquarius January 29 – It's wise to take sensible precautions. You can't share this with other people because it's a matter for you (alone) or a rather sensitive subject. But having come this far, you know what is required. Common-sense is your best friend now. Nobody is saying that X, Y or Z is ever going to happen. But you're wise enough to prevent it before it does.
- H-386 Pisces January 29 – Where some people are concerned, you need to take a tip from Hygeia, the Roman goddess who promised that prevention was better than cure. You've been through such a complicated time with him, her (or them!) that now you need to either take advice from a cautious female – or just absorb the wisdom of the goddess. Prevent potential problems.
- H-387 Capricorn January 29 – The asteroid Hygeia is in Capricorn, your own sign, and this is going to help you hugely with ongoing issues about the way you look and the way you are seen. The intensity has largely gone. All that remains is the need to make sure you take care of what concerns you about the future. It's just a scenario. But you can still block it. Totally.

- H-388 Sagittarius January 29 – Now you’ve processed all the figures or facts available, you can move into a different phase with the money, the house, the business, the valuables or the flat. Having experienced so much in the last six months, what do you now know you absolutely need to do, to keep everything safe and secure for 2012? Your horoscope says it’s a call to action.
- H-389 Scorpio January 29 – What do you need to organise, in terms of your computer or telephone, so that you can sail through any possible issues in 2012? Now is the time to do it. There may also be particular projects which depend heavily on your way with words, images or ideas. What can you create in terms of a bit of savvy, advance housekeeping? It’s all a good idea now.
- H-390 Libra January 29 – Think about what you need to do, in terms of the house or flat, to stop a particular scenario in the future. It may even be a new insurance policy. Then there is the family, or your flatmate. What can you be most practical about in the circumstances? Of course, half this stuff may never happen. But it feels good (at last!) to be cool, calm and collected.
- H-391 Virgo January 29 – Patience and plodding wisdom help your practical plan for the future. You have been through such an epic episode with lovers, the question of pregnancy (or contraception, singleton life, nieces, nephews or godchildren lately. Now the endless head miles are over, you can be savvy and sensible. What do you need to do to protect yourself. Or a situation?
- H-392 Leo January 29 – Prevention is better than cure. Forewarned and forearmed is better than the alternative. What is it about your health, your working life, your time at university, your fitness or your volunteer role that needs to be managed? You’re over the intensity now. But there are some lessons there from 2011 to keep. It’s time to look after your future properly.
- H-393 Cancer January 29 – Well, you can stop thinking and talking about that man or woman now! You may not have removed the basic issues about control. But you are in a good position to learn from the last few months and do something so practical about the future. Now you know what might just happen (either with this person or one like them) it’s time for a proper plan.
- H-394 Gemini January 29 – Emotions can be left out of it, and actually that’s the best thing. This is a question about the money, the house, the possessions, the business or the flat. The powerful asteroid Hygeia, who helps you prevent problems before they happen, and solidly protect you, is on your side. She’s in the totally practical sign of Capricorn. So just be practical. Finis!
- H-395 Taurus January 29 – You were perfectly fine before (around two years ago) when you were travelling, studying, writing, teaching, publishing or dealing with other nationalities in a particular way. Something or someone has run away with you. Or run off with you. Roll up your sleeves and get back to basics. What needs to change? It doesn’t have to be a big deal.
- H-396 Aries January 29 – Just be practical about it. Someone (or something) has swallowed up the career, volunteer role or university life that you had before 2008. Can’t remember back that far? Just remember when you weren’t feeling like everything had been taken over or taken away! What is required is a firm, common-sense, no-nonsense action plan.
- H-397 Aquarius February 1 – If you enter the realms of fantasy with money, business or property then it really is fantasy. And stories eventually reveal themselves as just that – stories! The trick now is to allow for a bit of experimentation and exploration, all the time keeping it real. Because it could become epically unreal after Friday when Neptune changes signs.
- H-398 Pisces February 1 – Find an outlet for a very new kind of physical energy which is being stirred up by issues with your former, current or potential partner. Or even with some kind of rival, enemy or opponent. This is transitory weather, but it needs some kind of remedy. (Bikram yoga?) Your looks, or your name, is also on the agenda. Observe from a distance; be watchful.
- H-399 Capricorn February 1 – You may prefer to blog, to e-mail, to speak face-to-face – or to use images. You may use Youtube or social media. You might be someone who likes a foreign language to get her message across. Or maybe it’s just about the phone or the tablet. Two major planets suggest an epic change in atmosphere, feel, priorities with words and ideas shortly.
- H-400 Sagittarius February 1 – Your career, life at university or volunteer role is in an odd phase (over by April, far more normal in July) when everyone is running backwards. Seems like something should happen now, now, now – but it just isn’t. A little strategy could be a truly useful thing. The house, flat, family or flatmate situation is ripe for epic change. Just watch.
- H-401 Scorpio February 1 – This is an epic astrological cycle for making babies under confusing conditions, so if you don’t want one (or he doesn’t) then heed your horoscope and look the condoms in the eye. Other people’s children (young relatives, friends’ kids, professional involvements with younger people) are also in the picture. That agreement needs watching from a distance.
- H-402 Libra February 1 – The daily routine, the job, the university course, the volunteer role – or the health issue – it’s all there in your horoscope, larger than it’s ever been. And someone wants to meet you halfway. Great. But bear in mind that from Friday any connection you have enters quite different territory. It’s potentially chaotic but also on some level, quite enchanting.
- H-403 Virgo February 1 – Life is a set of scales. You and he (or she) are trying to make this balance, even though you come from different worlds. If you succeed, even halfway, then from Friday all known parameters and rules dissolve, and you both enter a kind of aquarium of emotional and sexual possibility! Do you have an enemy, rival or opponent? Draw a firm line in the mud.
- H-404 Leo February 1 – Other people’s money, houses, business interests, possessions or flats occupy your field of vision. And this is a duet, and a veritable balancing act. At the same time, there is a weird case of stalled action with other stuff – your own particular cash or valuables, or even your own values. Keep watching, measuring, taking notes, strategising. Take your time.
- H-405 Cancer February 1 – Venus in Pisces tells you that this is a two-way street, in terms of the trip, move, book, website or course. Or the person from another culture. Neptune in Pisces from Friday tells you that all known boundaries will dissolve. Are you ready for that? Computer, phone, talking or listening issues hover. They’ll hit resolution after April so pace yourself.
- H-406 Gemini February 1 – Action in reverse with the house, flat, family or flatmate calls for clever timing and an astute grasp of how green-light or amber-light this actually is. Venus in your zone of ambition and achievement suggests a pairing, a bonding or even a genuine dynamic duet. And if you take this all the way, it floats into the most fascinating new space after Friday.

- H-407 Taurus February 1 -A friendship or group involvement feels like a potential marriage. Weird. But even weirder, from Friday, unless you keep some firm idea about boundaries! Plunge or not? That's your choice. It's an escape from reality but like all escapes, it could end up feeling very unreal eventually. Sex or other people's kids may be an issue. Think long term, to July.
- H-408 Aries February 1 – If you co-operate closely with that person who makes it a two-way street over your secret (or your time alone) then it will become a whole new episode from Friday. Take your time entering unknown water! Looks like work or university (or volunteering) feels like running an Olympic sprint backwards. So pace yourself. This could go on for months.
- H-409 Aquarius February 2 – This is about other people's children – so young relatives or godchildren. It may also be about babies, kids or teenagers en masse, so maybe there is a professional or voluntary concern. Finally, there is the epic question of sex, contraception, dating Dads...and your own feelings about potential parenthood. Today's task? Work a big soulful question.
- H-410 Pisces February 2 – The house, flat, family or share household question which lingers now points to a new sense of possibility and hope for the future. Of course, much depends on how a person who must divide his/her time and energy handles this role. But no doubt about it, something is changing. The final release from a stuck situation comes later on in 2012.
- H-411 Capricorn February 2 – The Sixth House of your horoscope rules your health, job, fitness, university course or volunteer role. It's about all the hours in your day and the way you work them. Something epic is happening. You can see a way through and forward. It's promised and not actual. But what is very real, is the promise that a repetitive situation will stop in 2012.
- H-412 Sagittarius February 2 – It's all about your former, current or potential partner. Or a person who is up against you. The situation never alters, but you can profoundly change your response to it, on the inside. And don't miss that big, brilliant promise of something better. That's new and it's real. Much depends on a person who is very much in the middle.
- H-413 Scorpio February 2 – The money, the property, the business or the precious possessions? Which must you give more time and space to? The interesting thing is the role of the person, or organisation, which is now answering to both sides. The mood has changed too. It's so promising. So hopeful. You have a lot to work with and think about over the next day or two.
- H-414 Libra February 2 – The Ninth House of your horoscope rules digital and traditional publishing, education and academia, regional or international differences and travel. You need to keep a strong, steady focus here. The situation never changes, overall. It's like a rewind button stuck with glue. And yet there is a strong promise for the remainder of 2012 now. Go with it?
- H-415 Virgo February 2 – It's not often that I see two important asteroids, along with the Moon and the Moon's Node, all in your zone of career, university and volunteering. But there they all are. A lot depends on the skill and tact of a person or organisation which is now piggy-in-the-middle. But the over-arching factor is your inner attitude. That changes everything.
- H-416 Leo February 2 – It's all about your friend or the group. Ops and Proserpina tell you that someone will act as a human bridge between two very powerful people or networks of individuals. And also that despite fairly tough conditions there is a brilliant, blazing promise of something better. This has been a karmic trip for you. But the karmic revolving door also shuts later on.
- H-417 Cancer February 2 – A cluster of heavenly bodies gathers in your Twelfth House of secrets and solitude. So you have much to discuss with yourself. The universe may take you out of the loop for a day or two, in whatever way it can. Alternatively your instincts will tell you to go inward. There is a real promise of something hopeful for the rest of February and beyond.
- H-418 Gemini February 2 – It's all about your name, and what it means to people, and your appearance. So this is packaging. You are now at a point where you can see the light at the end of the tunnel and hope for the future. It's connected to a situation where much rests on negotiation, compromise and sharing. Give this as much time and space as you can allow.
- H-419 Taurus February 2 – The money, the business, the property, the possessions. What gives? Well, for a start, you can see something technicolour, bright and beautiful where before it was all monochrome. Someone is going backwards and forwards between you, he, she and/or they too, so much rests on the efficiency of this go-between. There's a lot to figure out now.
- H-420 Aries February 2 – The Moon in Gemini, but also Proserpina and Ops? That's a picnic, all in your zone of words and ideas. It looks as though there is a big, brilliant thumbs-up from the universe guiding you forwards. And yet nobody would say this was a simple situation. It may involve technology or old-fashioned talking and listening. But it's time to make this really work.
- H-421 Aquarius February 3 – Whatever lures you in terms of the cash, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions is not real. It may even be shiny plastic (literally!) It is important to be quite clear about that, because the situation you set up in February will not easily depart. Lose yourself as much as you like, but come home afterwards. This applies to scratch cards, low-interest mortgages and win-a-chicken bingo.
- H-422 Pisces February 3 – Who do you think you are? This isn't about your family tree, although perhaps it may be, in part. It's a perfectly valid question, based on the deep shift that is happening in your world, later tonight. You have never lived through Neptune in Pisces, your own sign, until now. And this cycle runs for years. Understanding when play-acting or 'let's pretend' is a fun, temporary escape is part of the deal. It can't be 'real'!
- H-423 Capricorn February 3 – If you were confused about your values, the confusion stops shortly. Your values, in this specific case, revolved around your principles and ethics. But also, perhaps who or what you figured was priceless (money could not buy it). Nothing in astrology is random, and all the little stories that have been building around you since November teach you the same thing. That 1998-2011 belongs in the distant past.
- H-424 Sagittarius February 3 – In recent days, you've been invited to escape into a new non-reality by changes affecting the family, your house, the share household or your flat. There may have been open doors into an altered-state version of your neighbourhood or country. It's all been hints and possibilities so far. Nothing taking real effect. But from tonight, something or someone quite new is calling you. Take your time responding.

- H-425 Scorpio February 3 – Neptune doesn't just bounce into a new sign (Pisces, tonight) and everything changes in a flash. This epic alteration in your destiny has been back-announced since November. That's why there have been particular changes flagged with the family, the house, your share household or the flat. Or even the neighbourhood, or Britain, full stop! It's all about belonging. And after a lot of confusion, belonging is back.
- H-426 Libra February 3 – You have been living in an altered state, or different reality, for years. Your horoscope points to intimacy as the main area of this unreality – especially in terms of all those questions about having children one day, or not. Or dating Dads, or not! There are also broader questions about what you'll leave of yourself, to those born a generation after you. From 7pm the 'other world' collapses. You're back in the room.
- H-427 Virgo February 3 – The daily routine which is central to your whole being has been bent out of shape for years, now. This cycle stops tonight. Virgo is built on the ritual of daily details, and a commitment to everything being pure or perfect. Thus your particular approach to everything you put in your body (all categories) and your ideas about work. Since 1998 this has been so elusive and hard to control. But it's coming back to you tonight.
- H-428 Leo February 3 – You need some kind of event involving a former, current or potential lover to signal the end of unreality. So that event may have occurred this week, or you could be in the thick of it now. It really is thick, too, like a pea souper fog in the days of Sherlock Holmes. That low hooting sound is the foghorn, but after 7pm you won't even need that. The night will look bright, sharp and clear for the first time in years.
- H-429 Cancer February 3 – It's good to know that you didn't really belong in a particular financial, business or property world. Becoming fully conscious is trickier, but the departure of Neptune from the fogged-up sign of Pisces tonight will help. The next two weeks will be the Full Monty wake-up call as there are numbers to crunch or questions to answer. But it should all be welcomed. There's nothing as crisp underfoot as clear solid ground.
- H-430 Gemini February 3 – If you look back over the past few years, you'll realise there was a particular type of person coming through, repeatedly. These men or women were looking for an escape route in life, probably because they didn't want to be where they were – or because they had a wobbly sense of identity. The good news is, you're about to see this 'type' vanish from your world. And it will make the big picture much clearer.
- H-431 Taurus February 3 – If your boss, lecturer, colleague, employee, client or fellow student gave you open access – and if it ended up in confusion – then it's really been co-created by both of you. This all becomes clearer as Neptune slowly edges out of your career and university zone. People with weak boundaries may be the issue here. But you also need to look at your sense of self, origins and destiny. It's about to become real again.
- H-432 Aries February 3 – The end of a cycle in astrology doesn't just happen on one day (in this case, this evening). It's back-announced, so there have been all kinds of clues and signs about people since November. The full wake-up call which is coming has been artfully constructed by the universe for months, now. Someone in your social world does not know who he or she is. This person swam into your space. And now they're out again.
- H-433 Aquarius February 4 – Something on the financial, business or property side of your life is calling you (luring you might be a better word) with all the charm of a siren on a rock. There is no hard place to land, though. Instead it's all fuzzy and unclear, but sometimes that's a nice place to be. You are at the very start of a long, long cycle when any mistakes about what is real, or realistic, will cost. So don't go there. Not even now.
- H-434 Pisces February 4 – Park the emotion at the door. Park the physical response, too, which may range from a faster-beating heart to a slight sheen of sweat (even though it is cold). This man or woman who affects you so much is triggering the dinosaur part of your brain. Best thing to do? No matter if this is raging passion or serious enmity, the idea is to sketch out a time-frame and a plan. Give yourself until July. It's a plan, Stan.
- H-435 Capricorn February 4 – The recurring confusion about the financial side of your life has gone, and this is bound to have an effect on your ideas about the house or flat. Freedom is the big, ongoing issue there and you have already seen why, in the context of a family relationship, or the state of play with your live-in partner or flatmate. Now you know exactly what numbers you are working with, this sets up a change for March.
- H-436 Sagittarius February 4 – Before agreeing to any changes with the house, flat, family or share household in February, you may want to talk to a Scorpio about her experiences. This is particularly important if there is a new lease, mortgage or renovation planned, or if new people are coming in (or others going out). No Scorpio available? Just pretend you know one. They have x-ray vision and scope out situations before they happen.
- H-437 Scorpio February 4 – Some people might take the point of view that a family 'system' in your life should have been better run. Instead of working like clockwork, it's been all over the place, for years. There are also those who might say this about a repeated situation with flatmates. Finally, from one point of view, the houses or flats concerned have just been too open to everything/everybody! Now, how is this affecting your ideas?
- H-438 Libra February 4 – There have been so many times in the last few years that you've been too far out, or gone in too deep, that you can be forgiven for still having potent memories of your most emotional experiences. These memories will fade, as you slowly become accustomed to the idea that you have have a love life, or a sex life (or even a role with children) which does not involve getting utterly lost. It's a brand new day.
- H-439 Virgo February 4 – The career or university change that has been so long overdue is now rolling. The next chapter comes after June, making the second half of 2012 so full of hope and reward. The initial stage of this new phase starts now, as a person who has no concept of what is appropriate or practical has gone. Alternatively this person is undergoing a big personality change. A reshaped success story is waiting for you.

- H-440 Leo February 4th – In future, your lover will no longer see you (and your world) as a place to escape to. This means you will attract people who don't have any issues with who they are, or where they come from, or what their future actually is! If your current partner has repeatedly created confusion by crossing a line, all the time, this is also at an end. There is something so new in the air today. It's like the mist has finally cleared.
- H-441 Cancer February 4 – You have interpreted a particular relationship event (with your former, current or potential partner) as a power play, when in fact it was just an honest and soulful statement or action. Rather than fall back into the old chess-playing games of old, try to see this as something separate from all that. It's not necessarily true at all that this person wants to be top dog. But something needed to come out. It did.
- H-442 Gemini February 4 – Anyone can see why you interpreted travel as an escape. Or the idea of moving all the time. If the money or time has not been available to you in 2010-2011 then you've travelled online instead, or lived vicariously through television programs set in exotic and distant locations! This rather odd cycle in your life is now over. In future, every escapist adventure (in your head or from an airport) is utterly real.
- H-443 Taurus February 4 – There was something about the last project or position that meant you were never really sure about where thing started or ended. Or even where the middle bit was. Everything was floating or meandering, and that's not particularly good for a Taurean like you. The next week or two will bring step-by-step reality checks as you gradually come back to what's true and solid. From June it all starts working for you, too.
- H-444 Aries February 4 – Over the next week or two, social networks, organisations, teams, clubs or other groups will look sharper, clearer and brighter to you. You haven't exactly been asleep, but you haven't truly been living in the real world, either. This is a good thing. After June and until 2013, so many new developments with real, true friendships or group involvements will work beautifully with special projects, plans and ideas...
- H-445 Aquarius February 5 – You're the change merchant of astrology. It just accompanies you, either because you trigger the fierce desire for change in other people, or because every so often, your frustration at a lack of freedom, inspires you to rebel. Quite radically too. Now, where is the change in your life right now? It's about a month away, but it's going to involve your way with words, ideas, images, projects. And the web. Oh yes...
- H-446 Pisces February 5 – The fine art of compromise is something else. It's all about dividing 'areas' up and sharing, or giving in. And of course, retaining a claim to certain things, people or situations which are part of what the whole drama has been about! There is not a single person on the planet who enjoys the process, except perhaps, that man or woman in the mix who thinks big. He or she has channelled a cosmic solution. Take it, baby!
- H-447 Capricorn February 5 – Because you have been given ego massages, from the time you were very small, for your caution, your planning abilities and your wise appreciation of The Real World, it's natural for you to strategise all the time. Lord knows your career or life at university has called for that, over the last 12 months or so! But here's some news. Early clues, reveal a rewarding, hopeful, BIG new work or study phase from June.
- H-448 Sagittarius February 5 – Someone like you, who is so well-known for travelling, studying, teaching, writing, publishing (life is an endless journey or learning experience) found the last 14 years hard. The nuts and bolts of getting your message across, dealing with information, running an internet-based life, a smart phone and so on, just produced puddles of splat. Here is a Dr Seuss homage: Goodbye to all that, puddles of splat!
- H-449 Scorpio February 5 – What on earth was all that about? November-January seems to have been like an epic reorganisation, as people (including you) had to find their new levels of power or control. The situation was so lopsided that the universe could not tolerate it a minute longer. So now there are new rules. The trick is, understanding that everyone had reasons for wanting to be top dog. But you'd all be barking, not to change!
- H-450 Libra February 5 – Your family life, or your share household, has been like a game of musical chairs. What kind of music? Heavy metal or opera. Wagner or Deep Purple, basically. You can blame the transit of so many celestial bodies through Capricorn if you wish. But much of what has gone down, is a classic case of people projecting stuff onto each other. Now it's all changed. There is much to work with and to discuss. It's exciting!
- H-451 Virgo February 5 – All those questions about who has some kind of entitlement or territory are over. Oh, the issue will come up again before the year is out, but you have learned so much, now, about never setting up a situation like that again. There are some people in this world who just take, or take over. This happened to you and you spent November-January figuring out the solution. Little by little, you're now on your merry way.
- H-452 Leo February 5 – You (almost) have your daily routine back. You might call it, having your life back. You may be a career woman, a volunteer or a student. Maybe your health has even prevented you from working. Whatever kind of lioness you are, the complicated process of change which dominated the last ten weeks is complete. What is now required is a fresh look at what work means to you. And how to do it best. On all levels.
- H-453 Cancer February 5 – Reconstructing the relationship you have with your former, current or potential partner will take some time and thought. After all, it's only very recently that you, he or she had to step down, or step back. That kind of thing feels emotionally intense, and the last couple of months have been non-stop! What you are left with, now, is a different notion of sharing and compromising. Give it all the thought you can.
- H-454 Gemini February 5 – Well, that was a journey. Ahem. You were taken over by something (or someone) on the financial, property or business front for so long that it almost became natural to expect it. Fortunately the discussion, document or e-mail has now settled, and you can begin again. This new order will take time to adjust to, but if everyone can put themselves in each other's shoes that's an epic achievement. Your turn first?

- H-455 Taurus February 5 – You will make or save far more money after June, in a cycle that takes you through to 2013. Every opportunity is worth taking and you will benefit via your bank account, flat, house or business interests. Why am I mentioning this now? Because the future is calling to the present. You are actually helping to set this situation up now, by committing to better days. Tough realities? Sure. But think of the better days!
- H-456 Aries February 5 – The future is being set up now, for June. So the ‘process’, shall we say, that you have been going through with your ideas, projects, internet use and plans is part of that future. This is all temporary, but when you look back from the happy perspective of summer 2012, you will be able to see how your clever strategising with a person acting as a go-between helped. So stick with it, just for the moment.
- H-457 Aquarius February 6 – Everyone around you just woke up from the equivalent of a deep sleep. You could see where people were out of touch, and removed from reality. Of course! And it didn’t matter what you said or did, the sleepwalking continued. Well, goodbye to that. This may have been a partner, relative, friend, boss or colleague but the real world is in full colour and sharp focus. And that means you can get on with it!
- H-458 Capricorn February 6 – This atmosphere is so refreshing, because it was never possible to seriously nail down the realities before. And that makes such a difference to the money you make, save or owe – and what you invest it in. This is also about the spiritual price you put on things too. Because those ephemeral things like freedom, love, security, pride – they all cost. This is a bit like nailing down your own stock exchange.
- H-459 Sagittarius June 6 – Something about your home life in 2012 or 2013 could be so storybook. It may be the nature of the house, garden, apartment or area. Or just the domestic set-up (houseboat, anybody?) This is just a gleam in your eye at the moment but by the end of March it could all be so epically real. Or unreal. Because, on some level, this just isn’t the real world at all! The trick is being aware of it and handling it properly.
- H-460 Scorpio February 6 – If there is one thing you can say about bricks and mortar it’s this – it’s all real. The shelves have to be put up, the grass must be kept down, and the property values are in writing. This basic fact of life has escaped you or others for so long, though, that nothing has really made sense, long-term, with your commitment to a particular house, flat or area. This is rapidly altering in front of your eyes. Time to talk.
- H-461 Libra February 6 – Was this about the particular personality of the man involved, or the woman in question? Or were you looking at a phase, entirely out of character, when they were affected by drugs, drink or too much daydreaming? In any case it’s all behind you. And things are moving so quickly on the emotional level. Some matters do need to be put into words (transformed from pure feeling) and then you’ll move on.
- H-462 Virgo February 6 – At last you can ask the questions that were impossible before. If it’s about your job, course or role as a volunteer, then you are free to fine-tune this. Before it was one long wobble. On a graph, your daily life would have looked like a marshmallow in motion. Right now you can see exactly what needs to be said. And over the long-term? Wow, Virgo. You’re back to normality. And from June, opportunities for success.
- H-463 Leo February 6 – Your relationship with a former, current or potential partner has a defined, sharp-edged, real-world quality that it previously lacked. And that’s the understatement of the year. There is so much more to talk about or put in writing, but after that it will be a long time until any future epic decisions are made. And that’s a relief. This intense focus of energy right now is there to help you come to terms with the past.
- H-464 Cancer February 6 – This is a total turnaround, in terms of your 2012 plans for money, business or property. It’s not even a restructure; it’s the steady creation of a new structure when there was nothing there before! July will show you what’s what and where all this is ending up. But that Full Moon approaching your horoscope is potent and there are a couple of discussions or signatures which need to go down, before March is here.
- H-465 Gemini February 6 – It could not be more different for you as a reader, traveller, writer or web queen now. Or is it the relationship with people from Europe, Asia or the US? A couple of important discussions or signed agreements lie ahead. Then on the 24th you can move to protect who or what matters most. This will be tested at the Full Moon on July 2nd, which is a long way off. Right now it’s closure, clean-up and set-up time.
- H-466 Aries February 6 – This is a bit like filling in a jigsaw, but do you need to discover which crucial bits and pieces which were missing from the picture last year. And maybe the year before that. When people don’t know themselves very well, they often muddle the story, and you end up with a really scrappy, incomplete idea about who they are, and where you stand with them. This is now over. And this new picture is so revealing.
- H-467 Aquarius February 7 – The Moon in Leo suggests that you, he or she is currently playing the role of mother. So this is all about how one person in this situation ‘mothers’ or nurtures the other one. Your former, current or potential partner is involved. Don’t get so distracted by this issue that you lose the thread with bigger questions, though. These revolve around the way your name or physical appearance looks to other people.
- H-468 Pisces February 7 – The time has come, the walrus said, to speak of many things. Do you like Alice in Wonderland? Lots of Piscean women do. The many things you have to speak about now are a little bit like Alice talking to herself in a looking glass. This is a conversation with yourself and it’s about 14 years overdue. Peering into all your own nooks and crannies may seem startling at first, but you need to do some serious dusting.
- H-469 Capricorn February 7 – There’s a sharp awareness of how this particular episode with money, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions looks to the outside world. And you can’t have everything, really. But what you can have is a different kind of future. Either today or tomorrow, you’ll have some facts or figures in front of you that could help you reshape 2012 and 2013. Listen carefully to what others are telling you, too.

- H-470 Sagittarius February 7 – You are well-known for your adventures as a traveller, publisher, student, teacher, writer or lecturer. Or put it this way – you will be one day! That’s why this Full Moon feels so unbalanced for you. It’s affecting your feelings or plans. You can’t have a breakthrough with the written or spoken word, however, without this imbalance. And it’s quite clear now that a new era for communication is here to stay. At last.
- H-471 Scorpio February 7 – The Moon in Leo suggests questions about a maternal or ‘motherly’ role in the context of your career, volunteer role or life at university. And this could even be about a man, but it’s far more likely to be about you or another woman. You only have limited time and energy, though, so perhaps it’s better directed at the house, flat, share household or family. Crucial information is coming through or going out. It’s time.
- H-472 Libra February 7 – There is a question about your social media, your friend or a group that is impossible to solve perfectly. But that’s fine. It’s just a part of something far more important, and that’s the deep shift in your personal, emotional or sexual life. It started on Friday and it’s gathering speed, with more evidence by tomorrow. Use that reaction or feedback you are receiving. Others are taking a snapshot of the truth. It’s precious.
- H-473 Virgo February 7 – Notice the change in the physical space at work, or university? Or with that volunteer role? One in two Virgo women were set adrift in an office (or other professional environment) where walls were not walls, doors were not doors, and territory floated. That’s over now. In other cases the issue was a person at work or university who had no concept of what was appropriate or sensible. Again, that’s over at last.
- H-474 Leo February 7 – The Full Moon in Leo suggests your reputation or appearance is an issue. But not a very big one. It’s far more important to look at the progress that is now possible with a former, current or potential partner. Or even in terms of your rival or opponents. The days of guessing and not knowing are over. This is all about communication and information – the state of the Leo nation. And it’s time for some facilitation!
- H-475 Cancer February 7 – There are some questions here about how your values look to other people, or how you feel about others judging your house, your business, your possessions, your apartment, your bank account! This is pretty minor compared to the possibilities, though. Expect one of those pinging moments of truth by tomorrow. You have the numbers, either in the post or on your computer screen. Now do the maths!
- H-476 Gemini February 7 – Nothing is perfect, of course, but this is so much better than the old alternative. If you are going to explore life on every level, by opening yourself up to knowledge, or the big picture, or just a bigger planet – well. You have to accept a slightly bumpy start to take-off. But you really will feel as if you have taken off, by tomorrow. It will feel like flying with full visibility and a clever co-pilot. Instead of fog and mystery!
- H-477 Taurus February 7 – Well, there may be some issues here about the house, the flat, your share household or the family. But put this in perspective. You are being shown a new direction with your career or university life (or volunteer role) which is straight and true. Like a flying arrow. If you get this right, then it could win you admiration and respect. And isn’t it great to have hard facts replacing fuzzy logic for a change?
- H-478 Aries February 7 – You benefit from seeing a friend, or group, from an outside perspective. There is a conversation or piece of news waiting and it will make all the difference, too. If you ever needed a sure sign that things have changed, this is it. And in one instant it may become evident that new rules and new realities are all around you. What you might have assumed or relied on back in 2011 is beginning to look pretty irrelevant.
- H-479 Aquarius February 9 – The world of pregnancy, babies and children holds a special message of support and true backing for you. Look back and see. This will help you with quite another matter, which keeps pushing through into your consciousness, no matter how often you try to forget it. It may be a child you babysat, or a niece in your family circle. It could be a kids’ project. But that’s your clue and your key. Take a second look.
- H-480 Pisces February 9 – When in doubt, turn to a family member, a flatmate, or the house or flat itself. Maybe even think about your homeland or home town. There’s a strong (almost magnetic) pull towards this showing up in your horoscope. It wasn’t your first thought or initial answer, in terms of the complex situation you face. But if you are prepared to open this up a little, you will see just why this is where your solution is hiding.
- H-481 Capricorn February 9 – Turn to what you built up earlier, in terms of work, university life or even your health. This is where you will find what you are seeking. It might seem as if (to quote Basil Fawlty) this is The Bleeding Obvious. But it wasn’t so obvious before, and you do have some useful assets and advantages from the past, which can now be used in the present. This alone should get you through a situation which stumped you.
- H-482 Sagittarius February 9 – This is exactly the right moment to peer carefully at your former, current or potential partner and make a new judgement. This is an interesting week for your karma! The Moon’s Nodes, which describe everything you built up with this person, are humming in your horoscope. So see what and who is really there for you. Or not there, as the case may be. If you find strength, though, then it’s time to use it.
- H-483 Scorpio February 9 – Once you look deeply into who and what really counts (and really supports you) on a financial, property or business level – well. You suddenly realise that this is the key to something which has flummoxed you before. Go back over old ground. It may mean a reassessment. What you had counted on before may prove to be worthless. And what you had dismissed could be so worth it! Time to examine?
- H-484 Libra February 9 – To achieve what you want to do, turn to people from other countries or cultures, or those involved with publishing or travel in some way. Maybe academia or education, too. This is where the pot of gold is. You are no doubt feeling hampered or slightly frustrated by something which won’t budge, but you do have assets and allies. You built all this in the past. Sometimes you have to cash in your chips!

- H-485 Virgo February 9 – If you go back to the strong, good connections you built through work or university life (especially those stretching over the years) then you will find what you need. Or at least, who you need. It is also time to carefully examine what works, and doesn't work, in terms of your career or student life. You're being shown the core of all this, and looking deeply into the truth will help you in so many different ways!
- H-486 Leo February 9 – The solution you are looking for lies with friends, or a group. This all lies in your past, as the Moon's Node points to old karma. You have certainly scored points here and it is time to use them. Having gone precisely nowhere with something that has been bugging you since late last year, the answer is now clear. Turn to an old friend, or a circle of people, to get somewhere. And test 'friends' too. Do they pass muster?
- H-487 Cancer February 9 – You seem to be opening and closing your mouth like a goldfish over one issue. Not sure how to proceed, not entirely clear about what to do next. What you may want to think about is the time you spend alone (or spent). And a secret you are keeping, or might keep. This is where the useful stuff is. Think about what is covered up or done by yourself, and the answer will come. And it's time to pursue this.
- H-488 Gemini February 9 – Something (or someone) just won't go away. It's been nagging since the final quarter of 2011. And you feel you have to do something – but what, and when, and how? Your horoscope reveals the answer lies with your name or face. Your profile or look. It may be online or offline, but something about your image will assist you. Reach back into the past to find out what buried treasure you have. Use it again?
- H-489 Taurus February 9 – The answer lies in money, valuable items, business interests, houses or apartments. You have an itch you cannot scratch, if you are typical of your sign, but you can soon be out of this situation by thinking back to your assets. And perhaps, to people you would classify as solid gold assets. You've built up quite a lot of strong, good karma. Now it's time to put it to the test. This will help you scratch the itch.
- H-490 Aries February 9 – Turn to your best supporters involved with the written or spoken word, to break through. Geminis may be on the list. Anyone who is a devoted internet user, natural writer or speaker will qualify, though! You seem to have hit a brick wall or a full stop. Focus on the idea of communication as the way to unblock the situation. You'll also find out exactly who is the right person to stick with, and who, perhaps is not.
- H-491 Aquarius February 10 – Your personal ruling planet Uranus is moving in tune with Venus, suggesting a one-on-one situation that crackles with electricity – at least when it comes to words! The world of words, communication and ideas is buzzing for you now, and it's been years since this particular combination of planets hovered in Aries. What you are trying today, everyone else will be thrilled by, within months. It's worth it.
- H-492 Pisces February 10 – Meet someone halfway over the cash, business, house, flat or possessions. Even if you are totally different people you want the same, or similar things. This co-operation is part of a much bigger story too. There is an amazing chance now to commit to a radically different way of thinking about what you own, earn or owe for the next year or two. It's exciting. And it means you can do your own thing, home free.
- H-493 Capricorn February 10 – You can be your own person, now, when it comes to the house, flat, family or flatmates. If you have been willing to take risks every step of the way, the sense of freedom and future possibilities will be intoxicating. Even if you were only timidly playing with the options a while back, you'll still realise you've taken huge steps – by tomorrow. People or companies on the cutting edge will be drawn to you, naturally.
- H-494 Sagittarius February 10 – The old way of thinking about intimacy (or other people's children, or even your own eventual motherhood) seems so dusty and ancient. In fact, the more you look at what's spinning around now, the more you realise you can't keep on investing in the past, unless you are allowed to experiment wildly with the future. Luckily someone is around you to assist. This person is also interested in radical change.
- H-495 Scorpio February 10 – Someone who is clever (even brilliant) and way ahead of their time, has drawn closer. This is going to change the way you work, exercise, eat or study. It may even produce a separate, epic new phase in your life. The more you have been longing for something different, in 2010 and 2011, the faster it will come now. Many Scorpions are going to end up with a new position, role or lifestyle as a result.
- H-496 Libra February 10 – Sweet freedom. You can now be an independent agent, at least in the context of your former, current or potential partner. And even an enemy or rival. You're being shown how different life could be, if you were willing to experiment and explore. Venus, your ruling planet, is moving closely in synch with Uranus, the planet of revolution and freedom. And nothing less will do. You just saw a possible glimpse of 2013.
- H-497 Virgo February 10 – The day-to-day business of earning or saving money, or dealing with the rent, business, mortgage or bank is well known to you. It's way too real! Saturn is fulfilling a 29-year-cycle in your house of cashflow and ownership, which is why it all seems so heavy. Look to a second or third party, though, if you want to do something quite new. Something that would work well with your other big visions and ideas.
- H-498 Leo February 10 – You are on the brink of something utterly new and revolutionary, in terms of your life as a traveller, a woman of the world (dealing with other cultures), a publisher, writer, student or teacher. A situation which has prevented you or other people from being truly free is being lopped out of your life. What remains is a big, exciting blank space. And something (or someone) very, very new is here to occupy it.
- H-499 Cancer February 10 – A future career has just opened up for you – if you are typical of your sign. Even if it's not that dramatic, you are bound to be around people who are different (definitely different) and attuned to the future in some way. This will have an exciting impact on the nature of the work you do, the field of expertise you are developing, or the subject which you know you could help reshape. It's time to innovate and invent.

- H-500 Gemini February 10 – One of your more out-there friends (probably indie by nature, alternative or eccentric) is making an impact. You're being shown a different face of a social media network, a group or just the notion of friendship itself. If you are involved in any kind of team venture at the moment, that is building in momentum too. The jigsaw of your circle of friends is being pieced together in a remarkable new way now.
- H-501 Taurus February 10 – If some chunk of your old world, and old reality, appears to be falling away, take it as a good sign. You need the freedom, and the sense of possibility and potential will be huge, once you let a brand new idea in. This is the very early stages of something that could grow so much bigger. Depending on how experimental you've been, it's a revolution of sorts. And it affects you from the inside, out.
- H-502 Aries February 10 – Whatever time, energy and care you put into the written or spoken word, over the years, now returns to you. It's like a security policy you had forgotten about. With both Venus and Uranus in Aries at the moment, it's also time to encourage anyone, no matter how mad, to throw all their brilliance your way. You two could team up on any level you like, but it would give you so much freedom to be yourself.
- H-503 Aquarius February 12 – Time to take some control back. Especially over aspects of your life you cover up from other people (even your closest friend or partner). You are being shown where – and how. The key is feeling powerful about this, without power-tripping anyone else. That's the peculiar challenge of Pluto in Capricorn. You want, need and deserve that sensation of pulling your own strings. But not yanking anyone else's!
- H-504 Pisces February 12 – If you get it right, then your social life, friendships and group commitments can really empower you this year. You have just been given the information you need, or the close access to just the right people or situation. It's been a long time coming. Or maybe it just arrived in dribs and drabs. Now, there is nothing stopping you. Make this your own. Within one month you could be thrilled by the results.
- H-505 Capricorn February 12 – This is all very personal. But if you go along with people or organisations which are powerful, and sexy (and let's face it, utterly passionate about life) then you find everything transforms. This has been the great lesson of 2011 and it remains now. It's more relevant at the moment because Pluto, the dwarf planet, is in Capricorn your own sign. You can learn on every level from these kinds of people, now.
- H-506 Sagittarius February 12 – You are feeling this global financial crisis very personally, according to your horoscope. The headlines are all about Greece, or the pound, but the trickle-down effect to you (especially last year) was really potent too. Now, you are in a position to take, and take over again. The key is to follow the lead of a person or organisation which is very good at doing just that. Just don't make their mistakes!
- H-507 Scorpio February 12 – Pluto is your ruling planet. He shows you how to be utterly passionate about the written and spoken word (or the communicative image) and to thrill to the power of having it all under your control. If it also empowers others, so much the better. It's all very sexy! Of course, this wasn't always the case last year. Pluto is also cyclical in nature. But you are slowly getting used to his rhythms.
- H-508 Libra February 12 – The power is coming back to you, in terms of the family, share household, flat or house. This Pluto cycle (especially in 2011) has been epic. You have been through a long period when you had to relinquish that sense of being mistress of your own world. Well, Pluto is cyclical in nature, and now you can welcome back passion. And a sense of entitlement. The trick is making it work over the long-term too.
- H-509 Virgo February 12 – Before you can feel fully in control of the most personal, heartfelt, emotional issues, you have to go through the tumbledrier of destiny. The tumbledrier of destiny took you all over the place in 2011. Maybe the pregnancies, babies or children in your world were involved. (The kids didn't have to be your own). Maybe it was just about sex and where it would take you. Good news. You're in charge of your life again.
- H-510 Leo February 12 – Health, diet and fitness. Yawn, yawn and yawn. Or are you more interested at the moment? After a really variable 12 months you are now in the right surroundings, with the right stuff on the shelves (or the bookshelves) to make yourself feel better, in every way. Part of this is psychological – it's reassuring to know your lifestyle is right for you. But if you get this right, your body will certainly show you the benefits.
- H-511 Cancer February 12 – When it comes to former, current or potential lovers, you should be happy to know your instincts or tastes were absolutely right. Information has come to light recently which makes it clear your own, unique choice could actually work perfectly. Part of this is feeling in control again. Feeling as if the reins are in your hands. The dwarf planet Pluto's great gift to Cancerian women right now is empowerment.
- H-512 Gemini February 12 – It's quite true that something you are passionate about (houses, money, valuable possessions, bargains, apartments, business) can work powerfully for you now. That's the influence of Pluto in your horoscope. Information, online or offline, which reached you recently could alter the way you approach everything. Your instincts led you in a certain direction. One or two experts back you.
- H-513 Taurus February 12 – You've been on such an up and down journey (especially in 2011) with the biggest ideas, the most distant places, the most foreign cultures or the most demanding subjects. The universe keeps trying to tell you something, though. In fact, it's even gently ushering you into the right place, at the right time. What you need to make all this work is right at your fingertips. Under your nose. Deep breath, try again.
- H-514 Aries February 12 – Everyone has their own opinion about your career, life at university or volunteer role. There are so many experts out there. You are stumbling across ideas which are going to empower you, though. Put you in control again. Pluto's epic cycle (it takes him over two centuries to reach your achievement zone) is truly helping now. What you know will give you the edge. As long as you stick to it, natch.

- H-515 Aquarius February 13 – After October you can drop the gentle case of mild paranoia. It's affecting your view of the internet, travel, university life, people from other cultures, publishing – the lot! All the interesting, big-picture stuff which normally tempts you has become a pointed source of concern for over a year now. The good news is, today you can take stock. Review what you're doing to manage. Is it worth sticking with or not?
- H-516 Pisces February 13 – The asteroid Diana is showing you how thrilling freedom can be, in the context of travelling, moving, studying, writing, publishing or teaching. You will lose guarantees or security but gain sweet independence. Yes or no? There's another horoscope story today too. It kicks off this evening, and it will help you take stock of work, university life or a volunteer role. Is your best coping mechanism still right for you?
- H-517 Capricorn February 13 – After the first week of October you will no longer have to live with the voice of doom ringing in your head, when it comes to your career, your life at university or your volunteer role. In actual fact, there are certain brisk realities about the kind of industry you've chosen, or the academic world, that can't be avoided. But what you can do, is drop any 'tactics' which clearly aren't helping. There's still time.
- H-518 Sagittarius February 13 – Throughout 2011 it was hard to escape the basic reality of where a friendship, social situation or group might take you. Now you are reminded of a likely scenario again. The interesting thing about Saturn cycles is that women often invite their fate (that which they fear) by taking unwise steps to try and avoid it. How peculiar is that? It's better to be philosophical, surely. But then all Sagittarians are.
- H-519 Scorpio February 13 – Precious information helps you get it together. The house, share household, family situation or flat is there to be reframed and from around 7pm tonight, it all starts to make sense. An important discussion, letter or e-mail may come onto your radar at that point, or appear tomorrow. This cycle is drawing to a close near Saturday, though, when at last you can turn your mind to other priorities.
- H-520 Libra February 13 – This is like a giant hand reaching down from heaven and cleaning your windscreen. It's going to make a difference to the long-term choices you make – either about having kids or dating Dads. Or maybe being child-free! Once Mercury, the messenger planet, lines up with Saturn (close to 7pm) it's all laid out to scrutinise. This applies to any professional or charity involvement with children too. You can see clearly.
- H-521 Virgo February 13 – The money, house, business or flat situation (dating from last year) means a certain acceptance of your cash karma. But the cycle ends in October. And in its place comes nothing short of a revolution. Freedom and independence at last! You had a taste of this towards the end of last week. Now it's time to balance everything out again. Just make sure your way of dealing with all this is helpful. Still a smart strategy?
- H-522 Leo February 13 – After years of drifting and floating (at least emotionally or sexually) you are now being gently taken back to dry land. One of the first signs this is happening, is the conversation, e-mail or card which is on the way by Wednesday. It may be hinted at tonight. There is also a lingering question about the house, flat, share household or family. Total space and freedom can be inspiring but it costs, in terms of security.
- H-523 Cancer February 13 – The asteroid Diana is in your house of sex and children. She is reminding you that true freedom exists only when there is no compromise and no forever commitment. You're either going to pursue that, or reject it. It depends on your priorities, no matter if love is the issue, or other people's kids are. You also have a money, property or business discussion or letter, after tonight. You can see clearly now the fog's gone.
- H-524 Gemini February 13 – For someone as switched-on as you, the last few years have been so utterly strange. The journeys, books, courses, websites or cross-cultural exchanges which should have been so clear, were about as clear as filtered mud. Now it's all different. And an important breakthrough is coming. Are you about to date someone new? Take your time. This person brings serious questions about kids, sex or condoms.
- H-525 Taurus February 13 – Your career, life at university or volunteer role becomes clearer by the day. Talk about a fog lifting! There's a conversation, piece of news or e-mail tonight, or tomorrow, which assists this new clarity. Saturn's long cycle in Libra continues to force you to face what (or who) makes you feel so vulnerable – either about work, study or a non-profit job. Time to review where you're at. Is your approach still right?
- H-526 Aries February 13 – You were shown what might happen (unfortunately) in terms of your former or current partner, some months ago. Or were you just shown a vision of what might be, as a single woman? Tonight you can take stock. How are you approaching this and is it still working for you? Saturn is in your zone of love, sex and commitment. So face your fears and be utterly practical about what you are doing to manage them.
- H-527 Aquarius February 14 – There are no boundaries in this very new situation involving money, houses, business interests or apartments. It sloshes around like the sea, over-reaching a cliff. Whatever structures are in place, even now, could be worn away in the most subtle but steady way. You can see why this might mean a very particular kind of future. Do you want that? If not, do all you can to ensure things are contained, confined.
- H-528 Pisces February 14 – Is it your birthday? Neptune is on your Sun. Read all about this planet at www.theastrologyshow.net! Whenever your birthday falls, you are now in the strangest, most mysterious cycle of all time, in terms of your face or name. Your profile, if you like. It could end up confusing you, just as much as it confuses other people. You can have fun with this cycle too. But boundaries so need to be put in, from the start.
- H-529 Capricorn February 14 – If a friend is on your radar for V-Day it's not surprising; there is a level of need within a friendship now that takes it into emotional territory. The truly important story today is about your way with words, though. Or do you prefer video or art? Communication is the state of your nation! You are entering a strange but fascinating new cycle when everything you knew is changing, all the time. Go in slowly.

- H-530 Sagittarius February 14 – The house, family, flat or share household situation takes you into uncharted waters today. It's all very new and somewhat unreal. You have no experience with this kind of atmosphere either, so it may take some time to really see what is going on. As there is a conversation, e-mail or signed document coming up, you need to ensure that things are watertight. Do you want future confusion? Nope!
- H-531 Scorpio February 14 – This is the first time in your life you have woken up to Valentine's Day with Neptune in your house of sex. This area of your horoscope also rules your (very) personal choices about pregnancy, babies and stepchildren for the future. Neptune always brings a feeling of unreality. Life can be like a rhyme or an illustrated story. Fiction, rather than non-fiction. So what are you making up or buying into? Check it.
- H-532 Libra February 14 – You seem to be thinking so much more realistically about the world of love and sex at the moment, this might feel like a very different V-Day for you. It will take a while to find your feet, but the shape of your personal life in 2012 will be very different as a result. The real story right now is your job, university life or volunteer role. Don't commit to anything or anybody without rules, boundaries, regulations and more!
- H-533 Virgo February 14 – There is absolutely nothing real or normal about your relationship with your former, current or potential lover. Your horoscope says it's like another world. An alternative to everything else. This is alluring, especially on V-Day. Which Virgo woman wouldn't love to swim into deeper emotional or sexual water, the better to explore? Just remember the rules. And there should be rules, with this particular situation.
- H-534 Leo February 14 – This is the first Valentine's Day for 14 years without Neptune, the planet of waftiness, in your house of love. Enjoy the new crisp clarity! Keep it clear, too, when it comes to talking about money, property or business. And be particularly wary with signed documents. There are no boundaries in this situation, unless you or others take the time to put them in. Sure, it could be great. But it must be contained, controlled.
- H-535 Cancer February 14 – The Moon is in Scorpio, in your house of sex (and other people's children) – along with questions about pregnancy. No wonder it's all so emotional, never mind Valentine's Day! The Moon slips out of Scorpio tomorrow. A larger, more important issue for 2012 just has to be your life as a traveller, publisher, student, writer, teacher – or global citizen, dealing with other cultures. A great escape is on offer to you.
- H-536 Gemini February 14 – Okay, so it's V-Day. But this is actually all about your career, life at university or volunteer role. Get into the swimming pool slowly, in stages, at the shallow end. The planet Neptune is altering the tone, mood, atmosphere and shape of what you think of as your vocation. Rather like learning to swim, you have to make sure you can feel your way along the walls. And know where the steps are, to get out.
- H-537 Taurus February 14 – The Moon is in Scorpio, in your house of former, current and potential lovers. One of you is playing mother, but which one? It's a parent-child relationship phase, as fleeting as the Moon herself. The much bigger story is your social life, your social media network, your friend – or a group involvement. Unless you actually like talking under water, keep it real, keep it clear, get it in writing and dot all the i's now.
- H-538 Aries February 14 – Well. This is all very, very new. For the first time in your life, mysterious Neptune is passing through your house of secrecy and solitude. And before breakfast, he meets Mercury the messenger. What on earth is going on, Aries? We'll never know. It's all happening inside your own head, or behind closed doors. Some of you will start a psychic awakening. Others will be dealing with classified information. And you?
- H-539 Aquarius February 15 – Chiron in your house of cash, possessions, property and business is telling you that nothing is impossible (or beyond the pale) until someone attempts it -and gets away with it. Question of the day – will an audacious move get through? For some Aquarians it is linked to a house, flat, family or share household. Even if there is no direct link, there is ample room to move there too. An opportunity is hammering.
- H-540 Pisces February 15 – Pluto and Fortuna in your house of friends and acquaintances (that group!) tell you that everyone has a turn, everyone has a slice of cake at times – and a slice of humble pie at others. It's rhythmic and cyclical and it's worth being philosophical about. Did you know you have just a few weeks left to do more with a special project or idea? Today moves it forward, if you are willing. This could be huge, Pisces.
- H-541 Capricorn February 15 – Did you know England is a Capricorn, like you? She was born on December 25th. No wonder you're both going through this intense period of media questioning. And maybe it is newspapers for you. But there is also Mini Me Media. So that's e-mail and Twitter, and SMS messages and your own communications HQ. The centaur Chiron is running around your chart. He wants you to say what's cool. Or just not.
- H-542 Sagittarius February 15 – Right after Valentine's Day, Venus (the planet of partnerships) makes a bold dancefloor move, in your house of sex and children. There's a connection here. And what a connection. But you also have to rely on timing, as it's not quite the hour, the day, the week for freedom. That comes near April 9th, when you really start getting your head around the most personal stuff, from contraception to dating Dads.
- H-543 Scorpio February 15 – Do you have a rival, enemy or opponent? This person will benefit you now. It's not unusual to attract someone who is such a born loser in a situation, they make a winner of you! On a more positive note, it's time to make astonishing progress with your former, current or potential partner. There is so much scope here and so much mileage. If you are single it's a happy hunting ground until May at the very latest.
- H-544 Libra February 15 – If you're in an empire-building mood, then Jupiter is here to help you. His largesse does not find you very often (once every 12 years on average) so do all you can, with this chance. The money, the house, the valuable items, the flat, the business – it's all there to be worked with. All things are possible, and everything is either there to be a)solved or b) taken so much further. The end result could be pretty amazing.

- H-545 Virgo February 15 – What you're being told, with your former, current or potential partner, is this – 'There are no limits until something or someone calls a halt.' There is something very punk rock about your love life at the moment, even if you're single. Chiron in Pisces, which is influencing you now, always tempts people to be audacious and try the so-called impossible. Got an enemy, though? Take care. He/she will try damn anything.
- H-546 Leo February 15 – The time has come to talk, again, about Jupiter in your house of success. He only visits once every 12 years so make the most of him. He often comes disguised as a large organisation with global offices. Sometimes he comes as a person who is larger than life, incredibly positive and very big with the gestures. May is your final deadline for delivery. Keep edging towards something so big, so promising...
- H-547 Cancer February 15 – The asteroid Fortuna is telling you to be philosophical about lovers (past, present, potential) and to keep your sense of humour. What goes up, must come down. What seems to be down, is always on the way up. You have a friend or group in your life which promises so much, too. And there's delivery! And even a delivery date! Time to aim for the biggest and the best, through these individuals.
- H-548 Taurus February 15 – A friend or group in your world shows you that life is to be tested. What can one get away with, now? Where are the boundaries? It's not something anyone should rush in to try, though. The asteroid Fortuna joins Pluto in your house of big ideas and distant places. This also embraces anyone from a different culture. Every low is a high waiting to happen now. And every high will bottom out eventually.
- H-549 Aries February 15 – As if you didn't know it, there is money to be saved or made in 2012. Or is this cash in kind? In any case, the slow roll towards more, more, more picks up speed today. There is also a major story unfolding with career, university life or non-profit work. Every single person in your situation, including yourself, has to take turns now. This cycle of may years means a constant rhythm of highs, lows, ups, downs...
- H-550 Aquarius February 16 – When Mercury and Chiron form a conjunction in Pisces it sounds like some kind of lurgy. But it's just about the cash, the house, the business, the flat or the possessions. And it's all about the beginning of what we might call your "How far is too far?" phase. Perhaps it's you who wants to come on like some mad professor, crossed with punk legend Poly Styrene. Or is it someone else? Hmm. Time to say yes/no.
- H-551 Pisces February 16 – Your face, hair, body, name or online profile is now the big glass dish in the experimental lab of life, where you or other people get to put everything to the test. Will this cause noxious fumes and create outrage? Or is this some brave, bold new thing in your life which (frankly) is way overdue? The only way you get to figure out what your new image rules will be, is to have a little prodding and poking.
- H-552 Scorpio February 16 – Once one person decides to experiment, wildly, and finds acceptance – well. It gives everyone else carte blanche to follow suit, and a new world is created. This is how we ended up with the stranger sexual positions, the more interesting erotic possibilities, and some very modern ideas about children, none of which involve being a yummo mummo. You're right in the zone for all this now. An experiment is calling.
- H-553 Libra February 16 – You've never really had a normal daily routine. Not for years. First there was this epic, slow revolution in your chosen field or industry. Then you woke up (about a week ago) to realise you were in a kind of fish tank. With no certainties or boundaries any more. What is happening now, challenges you to be honest about what you will, and will not, let yourself and other people get away with. Shamelessly, too.
- H-554 Virgo February 16 – There is a great Morrissey song (he's a Gemini, ruled by Mercury, like you) called My Love Life. You could write an opera at the moment, never mind a song. The Universe wants you to explore the concept of outrageousness, you see. Audacity and sheer bollocks. It's all a bit like Morrissey, which is why I mention him. And your former, current or potential lover is bringing this, now. What or who is outrageous? Or fine?
- H-555 Leo February 16 – There was a time when nobody thought you could, or should, have a test-tube baby. But Louise Brown was born. So what is happening in the laboratory of your life right now? In terms of a house, business, flat, financial question or precious possession, something certainly is going down in Chinatown. If you think it's all going too far then – it is. So stop it now. But if you like this experiment? Wow. New world.
- H-556 Gemini February 16 – You can't stop a Gemini woman from talking. Tweeting or cooking up a storm on a computer keyboard. As you know. And now it's all happening with your career, your volunteer role or your student life, you have to decide where the boundaries are in situation. Only by prodding and poking what's supposed to be realistic, normal and acceptable will you or anyone else find out if it is. Just don't frighten any rabbits.
- H-557 Aries February 16 – It's not letting up, this focus on the secrets you keep (diary-shredding stuff) or the time you spend utterly by yourself. It's all new, too, because you've never had Chiron, Neptune and Mercury in this zone of your horoscope in your life...So how to navigate? Well there's no rush. That's the thing. The classified information or the solitude can be handled slowly and calmly. Put on the kettle. Step away from the coffee...
- H-558 Aquarius February 17 – The Moon enters your Twelfth House of classified information and solitude, just after 5am. She remains there until the weekend, increasing the emotion involved in what you cover up from other people, or what you do alone. The Moon describes mother figures, and the theme of feeding, nurturing, caring and protecting. No wonder your dreams last night, were epic. Or maybe one is on the way to you later...
- H-559 Pisces February 17 – A friend, or someone in the group, shows you her inner Nigella. Or maybe her Jools Oliver side. How do you feel about that? Well, cake is always good. Or one of those 'there, there' shoulder pats. But given everything you and your circle have cobbled together, so precariously, wouldn't it be better to park some needs at the door? Your inner child will like this woman's inner Jools/Nigella, but is it practical?

- H-560 Capricorn February 17 – If a mother (or a wannabe mummy) enters your world via questions about your hair, body, face, clothes, name, reputation, profile – well. Quite clearly there is a vat of emotional vulnerability and neediness at the moment, felt by you or others. What happened over the last few months has seen to that. But for the sake of whatever you’ve worked out in your life, do you really need Big Mummy?
- H-561 Sagittarius February 17 – Well, people do feel a bit emotionally needy. Or like little kids, looking for biscuits and Playschool episodes. It’s not surprising, really, given what’s gone down with the cash, the house, the business, the flat or the stuff. January wasn’t that long ago, and neither was the final quarter of 2011 with all its intense questions about who or what has control...Now it’s sorted, though, why upset an applectart?
- H-562 Scorpio February 17 – The whole business of the phone or computer (or even the day-to-day stuff about being listened to, or read properly) caused a lot of internal squirming as recently as January. Those questions about who is in charge always make you antsy. But you’re now past all that, and you, he, she or they have a new way of working everything. All the more reason not to let a truckload of emotion, now, warp the plan.
- H-563 Libra February 17 – It’s only been a matter of weeks since you made the big adjustment in terms of where you live, how you live, or the people who share your surname (or your washing-up liquid). Everything is more or less hanging together, in terms of the “arrangement” even though quite clearly, something or someone has been utterly downsized too. And now look. It’s Fuzzy Feelings Friday! Should it really affect a system?
- H-564 Virgo February 17 – Just when you had it all figured out with your former, current or potential lover...or just when you had it figured out with the world of children...whoosh! In comes the Moon in Capricorn, letting you and everyone else know, how important is it to be taken care of, fed, nurtured and mummied. Well that’s fine, but it’s going to get in the way of a very, very new arrangement which you’re only just learning to work...
- H-565 Leo November 17 – Some women just need to be needed. And sometimes the universe just wants to send big, cuddly mummy vibes down from heaven. All of which would be fine, except it’s going to affect what you have only recently finished sorting out, with work, university life or your non-profit role. There has been an epic change in the balance of power. And that leaves residual feelings. Handle all emotion with rubber gloves.
- H-566 Cancer November 17 – When you look at your former, current or potential partner, you see...the hangover from 2011, when you, he or she became all caught up with questions about who was actually sexier and more powerful. There is now a new compromise agreement in place. But it could all wobble a bit, with the arrival of the Moon (your uber emotional ruler) today. If the new system that’s in place might wobble too – don’t.
- H-567 Gemini November 17 – The Moon arrives in Capricorn today, complete with Cath Kidson oven gloves and recipe book, at around 5am. She stays there long enough for you to get that big message about the need to be needed. And it’s being played out, not in the kitchen, but around house, cash, business, flat or big financial questions. All of which makes an emotionally complex situation even more tangled. At least, if you allow it.
- H-568 Taurus February 17 – Talk about an emotion churn. It’s like a butter factory out there in your horoscope, as the feelings go round. And round. No wonder, really, because all that’s happened with the world of other cultures, big ideas or knowledge since 2011 is so intense. But look. A new arrangement is in place now. Some people went up, others went down. And for this new system to work, those emotions should stay canned.
- H-569 Aries February 17 – The Moon enters Capricorn at around 5am, so unless you actually like toast soldiers at that hour, you’ll miss the bump. What you will notice, though, is how all the epic change with your career, student life or volunteering has produced Extreme Neediness. A mum in your world may be doling out the maternal giving. Or maybe it’s just the atmosphere hovering near the tea mugs. It brings out our inner six-year-old.
- H-570 Aquarius February 18 – Lots of Aquarians like you have been through that experience of seeing the way it’s (inevitably) going to go, with university life, teaching, publishing, travel or people from other cultures. It’s inescapable. The art to this cycle, though – and it really is an art – is to try and find a constructive way to live in the now. If there’s anything you did, out of naked fear, that just isn’t working. Well...find a rubbish bin.
- H-571 Pisces February 18 – This is the most extreme financial cycle of your life, but it ends in October. You’re nearly there! Until then, take a look at healthy paranoia and unhealthy paranoia. The last kind influences you to do dramatic, ill-advised things in order to try and escape what you don’t want to know about. Today is all about rosy-cheeked common-sense, though. Did you know this situation you are in is creative? It will work out.
- H-572 Capricorn February 18 – Once you learn, you know. And when you know, you grow. Does that all sound a bit too L.A. for a Saturday morning? It’s true, though. Because at around 4pm, Saturn will remind you that your career, university life or non-profit commitments are here to educate you. It’s all a weird part of your growth. In fact, you wouldn’t evolve like this (into a kind of wise superwoman) without this nine-month journey ahead.
- H-573 Sagittarius February 18 – Neither you nor anybody else can stop the reality of what is happening in terms of social media, your social life, your friend – or that particular group. There is an inevitability about it. The interesting thing is, even if you try to evade your fate (as you may have done in 2010 or 2011) the very act of doing this hastens the story! So the smart money is on creative, thoughtful, philosophical acceptance. Oh yes.
- H-574 Scorpio February 18 – Saturn has shown you what’s real, true and unavoidable about the secrets you keep, or the time you spend alone. You keep thinking “It’s my karma” but you don’t feel any calmer. It just makes you want to take big, drastic measures (done!) or even pretend it’s not really happening. Saturday, also known as Saturn’s Day to your ancestors, is the perfect time to take a deep breath and be uber-practical.

- H-575 Libra February 18 – One way of dealing with the deep concern you always have about your reputation or appearance, is to take drastic measures. Maybe you’ve already done this, but today is the perfect time to ask yourself if your solution is actually worth all the time, effort (or even money) you have put into it. Another way of dealing with it is total denial. Somewhere in between all that, though, there really is a way through, then out.
- H-576 Virgo February 18 – This is without a doubt the most challenging financial cycle of your life but it ends in October (first week! order cake!) From that point on, a lot of what you’re going through now is going to create a revolution in the way you handle money, property or business in future. For now, try to accept the inevitable. Of course, since 2010 and 2011, you’ve seen the writing on the wall. But there are creative ways to welcome it.
- H-577 Leo February 18 – Before 2010, not to mention 2011, it was really no big deal for you to be online, or communicate in other ways. Since then, the computer, the phone, the business of being heard (or read) has all been onerous. And just a tad ominous. You were given a wake-up call two or three years ago and shown how the future would be. Now, nobody’s arguing with that, but it’s the way it happens. And how you handle it.
- H-578 Cancer February 18 – After October, that persistent voice which tells you how the house, family or flat is “definitely” going to be, will disappear. It’s not a voice you’re particularly fond of. It’s a bit like some gloomy bloke from Eastenders (pick any of them) played at the wrong speed. The thrill of feeling free – and relaxed – after October can’t be overestimated. Until then, ask yourself if your protective tactics are rewarding you. Still working?
- H-579 Gemini February 18 – In 2010 and 2011 you learned to live in the real world, where children or sexual relationships were concerned. You were shown a swirling image in a crystal ball (and only in the starkest shades of black and white, and the murkiest shades of grey) and now the ball is back in your eyeline again. So where are you these days? Just remember. There are smart ways to handle this. And anything that’s not, must go.
- H-580 Taurus February 18 – How to deal with Saturn in your house of daily routine, lifestyle, health, work and university commitments? One way is to pretend that you’ve forgotten what you saw, back in 2010 or 2011 (the vision of the future which confronted you so much). That’s not the way, though. Another option? Ooh, lots of Taureans have been busily doing something drastic to fend off their “fate”. But is it actually serving you?
- H-581 Aries February 18 – In both 2010 and 2011, Saturn lingered longer, in your house of love. He’s still there, and he won’t quit until October. Saturn waves frantically at you today, around 4pm. Just in time for afternoon tea, although it may seem like the longest afternoon ever. The trick with this planet is never to ‘cleverly’ come up with a solution to your concerns that is worse than the thing you fear. This is about he or she. Or just...love.
- H-582 Aquarius February 19 – Sometimes, when the real world gets too much, you just want to plunge into something else. And now that this Something Else has a shopping or lifestyle component (or an escape-from-debt component?) you are quite naturally seduced. The thing is, this new cycle will deliver the fairy tale to you, over the next few years. But to start with, do contain and control this!
- H-583 Pisces February 19 – Have you ever looked at your hand under water? Or heard someone say your name, at the bottom of the swimming pool? That’s what is now happening to your appearance, identity and image. It’s lost its sharp edges and clarity, for yourself and for other people. Before this goes any further, you may want to peer, with intense scrutiny, at what is going on...
- H-584 Capricorn February 19 – This is an utterly alternative way to be heard or read. It’s fascinating, on some level. But not remotely practical, normal or real-world. Are you exploring new territory, in terms of new technology? Or is this just about the poetry, the public relations press releases or the camera? The only issue is this. You’re a Capricorn. Awfully realistic. So what’s your approach?
- H-585 Sagittarius February 19 – Take a closer look at the physical space inside your house, flat, garden or temporary accommodation. What or who can leak? It may be the tap upstairs. The gap in the window. The noise. Maybe people are ‘leaking’ so they’re all over the place, in terms of boundaries, locks, doors, fridge space and so on. Best time to contain and control this is before it takes hold.
- H-586 Scorpio February 19 – Maybe your dynasty is a long way off. It’s going to depend on the right guy (or sperm donor), correct? Or finding a dad to date? In other cases, it can feel as if the dynasty is right here. It’s manifesting through a young relative or godchild, or through kids you have a professional or charity involvement with. Whatever your personal situation tonight, Keep It Really Real!
- H-587 Libra February 19 – Unless you want your daily routine to resemble jelly-juggling in a fish tank full of strange amoebae, you will need to take Certain Steps this evening. Strangely, what you used to call a job, or a course, or a charity commitment is now looking increasingly like an escape. It feels refreshing – utterly different. There are no boundaries in the situation, though. Put them in!
- H-588 Virgo February 19 – This brand new Neptune cycle in your house of love will take some getting used to. You’ve never had this experience before, and unless you talk to a Leo (they had it for 14 years) you may feel very wide-eyed about what is taking place. Basically, the great escape that a particular person or situation represents, must fit with the real world. That’s all. And that’s it.
- H-589 Leo February 19 – Matters of a joint financial nature have quickly altered shape. Everything is morphing and flowing, like tidal currents being fed by a river. So how do you manage all that? Well, there is a great deal to be said for what refreshes you, or takes you away from the real world. But without some kind of order or organisation, this is just going to be a chaotic puddle...
- H-590 Cancer February 19 – You are being pushed in the deep end with a big idea (digitally or traditionally published), an important person from another culture or country – or a very demanding subject. Suddenly, everything is mysterious and chaotic. Rather like the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. Still, it’s not the real world. And ‘not being the real world’ is sometimes all it takes. Submerge carefully.

- H-591 Gemini February 19 – Neptune cycles are subtle, like the action of water on stone, but they gradually erode structures in your life. This now applies to your job, your volunteer position or your university life. Something, or someone, has snuck into your world and you are now at the very first new stage of this erosion. If you like and value what was set in stone, then keep an eye on all this.
- H-592 Taurus February 19 – If you are in the company of friends or particular networks this evening, take a closer look at what is being revealed. The Sun in Pisces will shine a floodlight into the murkiest depths as well as the most fascinating fish. It's all very Nemo. Again and again, you will want to plunge back into this new unreal reality. But do take a look at what needs to be controlled, too.
- H-593 February 19 – You are about to see, very clearly, just how unclear your secrets, or your solitary times, actually are. At around 8.40pm there is a strong planetary pattern in the most introspective, hidden area of your horoscope. And this is just the start. This is actually the beginning of a new cycle when your inner life will swirl around, taking you from current to current. Keep it contained?
- H-594 Aquarius February 20 – The Moon is in Aquarius, your own sign, and on Friday the powerful asteroid goddess Hygeia will also be in Aquarius, giving you the chance to plan ahead. It's all about you, of course, and the way you are seen, and the way you appear. But these days, the atmosphere is real-world. This could end up changing the way you profile or present yourself, if it hasn't already!
- H-595 Pisces February 20 – It will take a while to adjust to a more centred, grounded inner life. You may not even remember what that feels like, as you have drifted through 14 years of a Neptune cycle, which never let you find your feet. It was most evident when you were alone or covering things up from other people. But now it is over. Today helps the adjustment process. Tiny, kitten-heel steps.
- H-596 Capricorn February 20 – Oh look. There are rules. There never used to be, where money, business or property was concerned. Or precious possessions. Even your own value system was subject to tidal waves and odd currents. You have been safely deposited on the shore, though, in a new world which has edges, and boundaries and everything. And today shows you what's what, at last.
- H-597 Sagittarius February 20 – The Moon in your house of words today, followed by the asteroid Hygeia on Friday, suggests a real turning point. You are slowly adjusting to a new atmosphere, in terms of the way you connect with people and reach them. What a long, strange trip it's been for you, at least online! But now it's time for a straighter, sharper world. And today is the first sign of that.
- H-598 Scorpio February 20 – It's been like living on a drifting houseboat for over a decade. Or finding out there are mermaids in the family. Or strange, unfathomable sea creatures. The zone of your horoscope which rules your home life, family relationships, lease, mortgage, renovations, neighbourhood, homeland has been...impossible to control. Well, that control is gradually coming back now.
- H-599 Libra February 20 – Time for some emotional recovery and a little normality. It's been years since you've been able to look at questions about sex, lovers, parenthood (or decisions not to parent) and so on – without confusion. By extension, this involves issues around other people's kids, contraception, suitable fathers – everything! Today lets you feel all the necessary feelings. At last.
- H-600 Virgo February 20 – You are famously a creature of routine, so it must be a relief to have some semblance of proper routine back, after years of drifting, or trying to cope as others drifted around you! It affected work, university life, volunteering – perhaps even your health. Today is another opportunity to absorb your new life. That was then, this is now. What do your emotions tell you?
- H-601 Leo February 20 – Talk about a change in the emotional temperature. This is about your former, current or potential partner. Or perhaps, about an enemy, rival or opponent. Let's just say that this man's name is charged with feeling for you – or this woman pushes a lot of buttons! Now the endless confusion has gone, it's time for some clarity. And there are big needs to consider today.
- H-602 Cancer February 20 – It's a strange new financial world, now the essential strangeness has gone. How's that for a paradox? You are now on dry land with money, property or business arrangements. No more ebb and flow. No more meandering and floating. Today's Moon in Aquarius gives a little emotional tug. But it only serves to help you see just how much has altered. More is on the way.
- H-603 Gemini February 20 – You can put one chaotic episode involving a foreign country (or local) firmly in the past. But sometimes you have to absorb the full emotional impact of a memory, in order to move on completely. It will take a little time before you realise you no longer have to manage this part of your life in the same old way. The confusion has gone, for a start. But first, the feelings!
- H-604 Taurus February 20 – It's interesting to look at your career, your life at university or your non-profit role in a new way. It feels more contained and controlled, these days. The flotsam and jetsam are no longer drifting, and there seems to be a place for everything now, and everything in its place...Still, there are some basic needs and feelings bobbing up now. And they need to be given space.
- H-605 Aries February 20 – The hangover from the last 14 years will take time to get over. There are some basic needs to sort out, left over from past episodes involving your friends, or a group. Do you feel like Greedy McNeedy, emotionally, or is it someone else? Nothing is the same any more. You swam in a boundary-free sea for a very long time. So yes, the aftermath will take a little getting used to...
- H-606 Aquarius February 21 – Nothing is real with the money, the house, the business, the possessions or the flat. And yet it's also what the world is calling 'real' at the moment. This could go anywhere, at any time – all the time! From tonight a bit of sensible housekeeping is well in order.

- H-607 Pisces February 21 – Your name, public profile and all the rest (photo, CV) is far too important to let people who are all at sea, have an influence. So if you feel as if someone or something has wobbled your world, the New Moon late tonight will help you sort this out from now until Sunday.
- H-608 Capricorn February 21 – It may be Twitter, or some other social media, but look at the boundaries. The New Moon in the sign of the fishes suggests you are swimming in words, and there are no clear limits. Between now and Friday you'll become aware of just how floaty everything is.
- H-609 Sagittarius February 21 – The New Moon tonight falls in your department of home, family and property – and also temporary accommodation. You are now in a position to go much further, faster with what has been a vague dream, to date. This week will help you put the details to the test.
- H-610 Scorpio February 21 – A person who muddles you, and probably muddles himself (or herself) has not gone away. It's either the physical proximity, their connection to the people around you, or the fact that you symbolise something to them. Don't want? Really don't want? Time to draw a line.
- H-611 Libra February 21 – You have been shown a way to work, which involves a permanent escape route for you. Or maybe it's a way not to work! Perhaps you want to keep this as a lovely fantasy, but not an awful lot has been happening since then. From today, you can make it real at last.
- H-612 Virgo February 21 – The New Moon tonight (look up and you will see it) lets you know that you need to take things further with a former, current or potential partner. Put this to the test in a practical and meaningful way. It's all inside your head at the moment. This lets you move things on.
- H-613 Leo February 21 – You have found a way to make extra money if you are typical of your sign, but there is an element of fuzzy thinking or mild confusion about the way it's all going to work. Sometimes it helps to crack your own whip. Because this really does have potential if it's managed.
- H-614 Cancer February 21 – You seem to have crossed an important line with a person all wrapped up with your plans to study, publish, write, teach or travel. Or is this a matter of cultural or foreign differences? Retrace your steps last week to find out where you transgressed. It's there to be fixed.
- H-615 Gemini February 21 – People who are confused (and confusing) have no place in your career, life at university or volunteer sphere. Or do they? It really depends on their ability to change. Unless this muddled and befuddling person can stick to your parameters, why let them blur the picture?
- H-616 Taurus February 21 – At last, an alternative. Something very new which just arrived – thanks to a social life change, a friend or a group – now suggests you can leave the real world behind. This will develop faster between now and Friday. But it has to work in the real world as well.
- H-617 Aries February 21 – The last few weeks have coincided with a lovely way to escape the real world, which involves keeping a secret, or being alone. Could it ever be more? The New Moon late tonight moves things along a bit, and by Thursday and Friday you will be testings things out further.
- H-618 Aquarius February 22 – Chiron and Neptune are both at large, altering the money, business or property picture. Because you have no experience with this cycle, you may find yourself going in too deep, too quickly. Observe this from a distance. Might there be chaos ahead? Pre-empt it now.
- H-619 Pisces February 22 – You could experiment and explore, using your name, photo, video or face as the basic material. That would be an escape from reality and Piscean women are always looking for one! Where will it actually lead, though? Not a bad time to peer into the future a little bit.
- H-620 Capricorn February 22 – To be heard and read, as you wish to be heard and read, requires above-average care at the moment. You are in a new era for communication, when life could become very confusing, very quickly. Best to get in early and stop something before it starts. True?
- H-621 Sagittarius February 22 – It's best to catch these things early on. A new situation affecting the house, family, flat or share household is building up around you. The drip-drip-drip in the bucket is subtle, but sooner or later, the bucket can fill and a situation can spill over. Time to manage this?
- H-622 Scorpio February 22 – If you keep drifting, emotionally or personally, you will end up so far out that it may be hard to manage. This may be your past, present or potential partner (or the world of other people's children) – but you must come back to what is real, and familiar – or float away!
- H-623 Libra February 22 – It's only been about three weeks since your daily routine, your working life, your time at university or your volunteer position moved into a new phase. And now it's time to be a wide-eyed realist about what is going on. How should all this be shaped and moulded, hmm?
- H-624 Virgo February 22 – You are famous for your facility with detail. So step back from what is happening with your former, current or potential partner. Or even your enemy. This situation is very new and unfamiliar, but that does not mean you can't direct it. You desperately need to structure this!
- H-625 Leo February 22 – With both Neptune and Chiron in your house of finance, property and business now, it's certainly time to channel what is there. And preferably contain it. Maybe there is a part of you which needs to find out, how far is too far. But where, realistically, is this taking you?

- H-626 Cancer February 22 – Even Captain Cook and Christopher Columbus needed maps and navigators. A big, wide, flowing new world of exploration, intellectual adventure and self-education flows before you. To avoid ending up all at sea, though, you need controls. Time to grasp that wheel.
- H-627 Gemini February 22 – Your ambition, your position and your mission require a little hands-on management at the moment. Potentially confusing and chaotic new influences have slipped in. And there don't seem to be any limits any more, either for you, he, she or they. Time to rein it in a bit?
- H-628 Taurus February 22 – Of course you want to feel the flow with friends – or a group. It's an escape. As this area of your life is prone to flooding and tsunamis, though (not now, but in the future) do check on what you are letting into your life. This is all very new, too. Since February 3rd or 4th.
- H-629 Aries February 22 – If nobody else knows about this, or it's just you and four walls, then it's time to be practical. The word 'practical' has potent, magical qualities now. Because absolutely nothing is! This is an alternative to the hard, cold, real world. But are you also managing to manage it?
- H-630 Aquarius February 23 – Something needs to be done about the money, the house, the business, the possessions or the flat. But what, and when? Don't be fooled by all the heavy breathing that's going on. This can be mapped out, scheduled, mulled over and all the rest. And it will help you.
- H-631 Pisces February 23 – Does this really have to mean so much huffing and puffing, and stamping up and down? This is about your former, current or potential partner. Or your enemy. And yes, it's emotional. But why on earth would you want to add oxygen to a forest fire? Suck the oxygen out.
- H-632 Capricorn February 23 – Analyse the situation which surrounds your life as a traveller, student, publisher, writer or teacher. Or is this about someone from a different country or culture? It could certainly escalate. But you're too smart to let it do so. Less impulse, more planning, yes?
- H-633 Sagittarius February 23 – Your job, your life at university or your volunteer position is generating tension. It's like a ping-pong ball, but you don't have to play the game, or hit anything back. Take the long view. See the big picture and see months ahead. What's your savviest strategy?
- H-634 Scorpio February 23 – A friend – or group – should not become the source of conflict this year. Of course, the current atmosphere does not help. But you do not have to buy into what is going on. Clearly, a plan is required. But with enough thought, it can be a smart one. Without emotional heat.
- H-635 Libra February 23 – When Mars is in your Twelfth House of secrecy and solitude, you just know that keeping things to yourself (or being by yourself) makes life tense. So what to do? Well, clearly you can't share this. But you can manage it. Remove the heat. Relax the pace. Think more.
- H-636 Virgo February 23 – This is about your reputation. Your Youtube video. Your photograph. Your name. The planet Mars would like you to race ahead, and fight back, or push people harder and faster. You don't have to. Just take a deep breath and come up with a cunning plan. Not a Baldrick one.
- H-637 Leo February 23 – If it involves money, possessions, houses, business interests or apartments, don't sign it now, or accept a signature. At least not without checking (very carefully) what this document actually contains. If you see flammable substances, then don't set up the fireball.
- H-638 Cancer February 23 – There's a fraction too much friction, to quote Tim Finn. And it's all centred around the computer, the phone or communication in general. Don't get stuck with this. No matter if you feel pushed, or you are pushing, just remember there is nothing like a thoughtful game plan.
- H-639 Gemini February 23 – The grinding of teeth, and the spinning of wheels, is affecting the house, the family, the share household or the flat. This will change after April 14, but for now, make sure things slow down, and cool down, so that this does not turn into some kind of ongoing, rolling epic.
- H-640 Taurus February 23 – Any friction involving a former, current or potential lover could go on for months, so don't treat this situation as a 24-hour wonder. Or even a week-long wonder. This also applies to issues involving the world of babies, children and teens. Slow down, cool down, plan it.
- H-641 Aries February 23 – Your ruling planet Mars clashes with Mercury at 11.25am so it is time for a little strategy, a lot of thought and a reasonable amount of biro-chewing. The alternative is to rush at this work, university or employment issue and go in so fast (and hard) that you create heat.
- H-642 Aquarius February 24 – All eyes are on the money, the house, the business, the possessions or the flat. That's helpful. It lets you see your world as other people see it. It's also time to choose. Should everything be challenged and changed? Or is there a limit to what is cool, kosher or okay?
- H-643 Pisces February 24 – The asteroid Juno in your house of career, university life and volunteering is reminding you of two things. Firstly, you can't have total freedom and security at the same time. Secondly, being utterly independent means you lose guarantees. So what are you going to do?
- H-644 Capricorn Friday February 24 – Money, property, business no longer floats or swells like a tidal current. You are in a new cycle. Just how new? Well, today gives you a chance to secure tomorrow by protecting yourself (or a situation) against possible problems. It's a bit of a milestone.

- H-645 Sagittarius February 24 – The house, flat, family or flatmate situation is attracting reaction, feedback from other people. This helps you see it clearly, even though it's become awfully unclear this month. Next question – is audacious behaviour useful, or not? Time to choose, Sagittarius.
- H-646 Scorpio February 24 – Test-tube baby? Why not. Punk rock sex? Why not, again. The only thing is, you are the absolute and final judge of what is acceptable, or quite unacceptable, in your personal life – or where the next generation is concerned. Are old rules really there to be challenged?
- H-647 Libra February 24 – You are no longer all at sea about sex, dating Dads, contraception or even other people's kids. Life just straightened up. So much so, in fact, that the powerful asteroid Hygeia is asking you to look at a way of protecting something or someone. It's a kind of insurance.
- H-648 Virgo February 24 – Your former, current or potential partner is in the the spotlight. Or perhaps this is your enemy, opponent or rival. The Seventh House of your horoscope rules both. If he or she is way out of line, what do you do? Is it also appropriate for you to get all punk rock about this?
- H-649 Leo February 24 – Two powerful lady asteroids, Juno and Hygeia, ask you to rate a former, current or potential lover in terms of safety and certainty. Take a closer look at business, money, property as well. If something leaves your jaw on the floor (or other people's jaws) is it right?
- H-650 Cancer February 24 – You're like a lady Tintin when it comes to travel, publishing, education, foreign people. Exploring and adventuring all over the place. Just bear in mind, you or others could now go too far. If it's inappropriate, illegal or just OMG you need to question this before you say yes.
- H-651 Gemini February 24 – The asteroid Juno is showing you a former, current or potential lover and asking you to rate security versus freedom. It's a personal choice you made, or are making. Your career or university life poses a question too. At what point does something become outrageous?
- H-652 Taurus February 24 – Your career, university life or volunteer role is no longer like the River Thames on a windy day. You are on dry land. And now you can move to protect the future. Keep an eye on a friend or group, though. Big question: is this a good idea or will it open the door to anarchy?
- H-653 Aries February 24 – Instead of being confused by friends and groups (or confusing them!) you can now be Sensible Sally and protect a situation. What's really crucial now, though, is your secret. Or your time alone. This is a major judgement call. Are things going too far, or is change right?
- H-654 Pisces February 25 – The Sun in Pisces, your own sign, re-introduces you to yourself. You need to see how other people see you, and you will. You also seem to be developing your way with words, ideas or images. You could reach more people, in a more influential way, if you persist with it.
- H-655 Aquarius February 25 – Between now and Monday light will be shed on a money, property or business situation, or a valuable item. Things have been unclear for weeks so it's time. Keep an eye on home exchanges, cheap flats or bargain DIY offers. From now until June it's all possible.
- H-656 Capricorn February 25 – Your astrological chart suggests accidental pregnancy (or a Dad-dating situation) could still be on the cards by June so take care this weekend. In other cases it's your niece, nephew or godchild – or the world of children en masse – which still offers you so much.
- H-657 Sagittarius February 25 – Your lifestyle, job, university routine or volunteer role could bring so much more. You'll see why by Monday. If you want to turn around your diet and fitness then outside factors will help. A house, flat, family or flatmate question will be cleared up by what is obvious.
- H-658 Scorpio February 25 – You need today, just to take a deep breath and see what is actually going on with the most heartfelt and personal questions. The Sun in Pisces will help illuminate the depths. Your former, current or potential lover is part of an opportunity waiting to happen.
- H-659 Libra February 25 – There is a wise answer for one of your deepest questions about your appearance, reputation or public image. This is also the time to go further with money, property, business or valuable items. What is shared, lent or otherwise not entirely yours holds huge potential.
- H-660 Virgo February 25 – The Sun in your opposite sign will reveal why opposites attract (or once did) and perhaps what the opposition is up to. Continue to snap up offers and opportunities linked to travel, university, publishing or foreign people. They stop in June, so keep it all rolling.
- H-661 Leo February 25 – Someone or something is shining a torch on your money, property or business situation. And a torch is what you need. The chances to expand your mission, position or ambition go on. Every step you take helps the overall journey. And by June this could be epic.
- H-662 Cancer February 25 – You can't make the situation with the house, family, flat or flatmate go away. But there is a cunning answer, which you or another woman will find. A friend, or group, reminds you that opportunities are there to be used and you're in the right time and right place.
- H-663 Gemini February 25 – One of the most personal, emotional areas of your horoscope offers an answer today. Wisdom wins even when you know you can't change anything. Did you know others are perusing your achievements, your position, your talents and skills? Shine on until Monday.

- H-664 Taurus February 25 – A friendship or group involvement is in the spotlight today. That should help you clarify what has been swirling around you since February 3rd. A work, university or volunteering question never quite goes away. But a clever woman will help lead you to a brilliant answer.
- H-665 Aries February 25 – You still have the advantage with saving or making money (or gaining from a house, flat or valuable item). Keep building this as much as you can. The goddess of wisdom, Minerva, is also here to help you fix a problem involving your former, current or potential lover.
- H-666 Aquarius February 26 – Today and tomorrow are great for house or flat hunting, decorating, attending to DIY repairs or fantasising about a home exchange or holiday residence. This also applies to family relationship-building and flatmates. Everyone needs a place, or people, to belong to.
- H-667 Pisces February 26 – The missing element is deeper feeling. The idea, the words, the images are all there. This is communication with others on a level you have not experienced for a long time. But only once the Moon glides into Taurus, today, will the necessary emotion play its grand part.
- H-668 Capricorn February 26 – This Taurus Moon is earthy (like you) and grounded (also like you) and it connects you to the people and plans you care about most. Sometimes sex is the best way to express it. Sometimes you just need to know who you're leaving your particular legacy to.
- H-669 Sagittarius February 26 – Seeing as work, university or the non-profit sector is about looking after other people, you may as well take advantage of this magnificent Taurus Moon to deepen the way it all works. Doing so, with the right person at the right time, spells serious opportunity.
- H-670 Scorpio February 26 – Good karma points scored years ago with your past, present or potential partner are now coming back to you. You probably had no idea just how much you were accruing. This opens the door for much larger possibilities than you would have entertained before. All good.
- H-671 Libra February 26 – Look to business, your finances or property for the advantages. This is where you have the plus factor you need. So far it's all been potential with a few impressive deliveries, but the best is yet to come. The reasons your soul needs will be there over the next 24 hours.
- H-672 Virgo February 26 – Your best bet still lies in Asia, the US, Europe or further afield. Or through a local. Or maybe you just want to write a book or go all-out to teach other people? The missing link in the chain has been the strong, true emotion you needed to get moving on this. But it's here.
- H-673 Leo February 26 – You can now see two, maybe three, even four ways to get what you want from your dearest-held ambitions. But the missing ingredient is day-to-day motivation. This could be so big, you have to give it your all, and then some. Fortunately that motivation is coming.
- H-674 Cancer February 26 – Your ruler, the Moon, moves through the friendship and group sector of your chart today, reminding you that if you want to reap the amazing benefits of a friend in your social circle (he or she is so connected) then you have to give it everything you've got. And more.
- H-675 Gemini February 26 – The Moon moves into the Twelfth House of your horoscope today, with the emphasis on what you cover up and what you do alone. Sounds very mysterious, but actually it's your gateway to a world of possibility. And you won't have this cycle again for 12 more years.
- H-676 Taurus February 26 – Your name or appearance – maybe the entire assumption people make about you – is the key to everything now. It's your ticket. But you also need to have the occasional booster and the Moon in Taurus after today should give you a reason to try that much harder.
- H-677 Aries February 26 – What is going to motivate you, more than anything else, with the financial, property or business opportunities ahead? They haven't gone anywhere, it's just that you need a motive to exploit who or what is in front of you. Between now and Monday you will have it.
- H-678 Aquarius February 27 – This is the silly season for money, houses, business interests, flats or shopping. So before you sign your life away, or invest a lot, remember that anything could change, at any time – or even go back to the drawing board. Life is back to normal in early April.
- H-679 Pisces February 27 – Mercury in Pisces, your own sign, normally makes this a time to organise your online profile, business cards, photographs, video, CV and so on. It's different in February and March, though. There may be u-turns or complications. Bear every scenario in mind if you can.
- H-680 Capricorn February 27 – If you are buying a new phone, dongle or computer (or anything to do with communication) check the terms and conditions. There may be issues with the post, too, over the next few weeks. If you feel you need back-ups or photocopies then do organise it.
- H-681 Sagittarius February 27 – Arrangements made about the house, flat, family or flatmates this week (or even small aspects of domestic life, like new cushions) could go backwards and forwards or even turn out to be false bets, in the next few weeks. It's no time to assume anything, Sagittarius.
- H-682 Scorpio February 27 – Keep your ideas very open-ended where your former, current or future lover is concerned. This also applies to young relatives, godchildren or any kids in your career or volunteer life. If it's heart-and-soul stuff then it could change or be delayed by early April.

- H-683 Libra February 27 – The work, university or volunteering situation looks changeable, to say the least. So even if something is in motion now, and could even be a done deal by Thursday, bear in mind it may stall or even reverse. All kinds of factors could get in the way. Read the fine print.
- H-684 Virgo February 27 – Don't rely outright on promises and plans involving your former, current or potential partner. This also applies to anyone against you. The discussion, paperwork or e-mail that's coming could be rubber. If you're dating someone new, he (or you) may be changeable.
- H-685 Leo February 27 – Take extra precautions with finance, business or property between now and April 4th as what appears to be going forwards could actually go backwards. There may be issues with communication, computers, banks or the post with changes or delays. Protect yourself.
- H-686 Cancer February 27 – Be careful with travel plans, publishing commitments, foreign connections, university arrangements or other study. Between now and early April it could all go Pete Tong, and at the very least, just a little pear-shaped. Check all the various scenarios and cover yourself.
- H-687 Gemini February 27 – The career, university or non-profit situation is open to change until April 4th, when what seems to be a 'final' conversation or reliable piece of news might not be. If you are applying for a job, resigning or dealing with a reshuffle, bear that in mind. Read the small print.
- H-688 Taurus February 27 – You might think it's time to lock in plans with friends or a group, or pursue an important question. Your horoscope says otherwise as people could be flakey, your own ideas may alter, or life may get in the way. Read the fine print if it's going to cost you money.
- H-689 Aries February 27 – You need to believe it's possible to save or make money, in order to go with the incredible flow that's now building. And you can, today. If anything in your life is classified, though, remember that from today what seems 'certain' could unravel by April. Keep it flexible.
- H-690 Aquarius February 28 – You've had about three weeks to entertain a vague but dreamy possibility which would usher you out of your current money, property or business situation into a kind of C.S.Lewis other-world. So far, so wondrous, but today will help you take a practical approach.
- H-691 Pisces February 28 – If you were born on, or close to, the ninth day of your Pisces zodiac sign bracket, today is epic in its consequences for your ego. Not born then? There's still a lot of feedback or reaction to you (or the way you look). It's like everyone holding up a compact mirror. Useful.
- H-692 Capricorn February 28 – You may be the woman who is going to invent the next Apple (why not name it after a pastry?) or as computer illiterate as they come, but your way with words could take you higher, further, faster in 2012, 2013. First, though, you have a bit of reality to attend to.
- H-693 Sagittarius February 28 – There seems to be a lot of staring and pointing going on, all of it in the direction of your house, your flat or your caravan (some Sagittarians prefer them). Or is this about your family or flatmates? A leetle bit of exposure never hurt. It shows you what's what. At last.
- H-694 Scorpio February 28 – In the hormonal rush of sex, or the swooniness of fantasising, it's easy to get lost. And never more so than since Neptune entered your Chateau de Shag after February 3rd. What's real any more? Does anyone know? Today the outside world gives you a reality nudge.
- H-695 Libra February 28 – Like the entire cast of Scooby Doo with a flashlight, your work horoscope is being illuminated by a lot of heavenly bodies. All at the same time. (If you don't work, this is about university or volunteering). So what can you see? A way out and through, that's what. At last.
- H-696 Virgo February 28 – So now you know the way everyone else sees your love life. Or your feud. The irony is, you won't get the dream without the reality. So you need the thumbs-up, thumbs-down (or exciting thumbs everywhere response) to give you a yardstick. That starts the dream off.
- H-697 Leo February 28 – You seem to have found a dreamy little possibility for yourself. A business idea that goes on giving. A neat trick with a house or apartment. Making ear-muffs out of old bras and selling them on Etsy? The thing is, nothing will happen unless you do the maths. Dull but crucial.
- H-698 Cancer February 28 – Well at least you know what other people think. That fantasy (other places, other cultures, big ideas, big subjects) is never going to become real without a few people prodding and poking. Even if you just read the feedback in their faces, it's a very useful pointer.
- H-699 Gemini February 28 – Everything you need to know (for early 2012, anyway) about your career, university life or non-profit role is being laid out. With tiny neon lights around it, just in case you missed it. Do your very best to organise this even if it currently seems so random or scattered.
- H-700 Taurus February 28 – Everyone would have a suitably nosey opinion, if asked, about your friend, your social life or that cluster of people around you. Some of them have already done it. But why should you care? It's all fodder. You can use this information to help you make some changes.
- H-701 Aries February 28 – That big, glaring spotlight on everything you cover up (or consider to be 'Me' territory) is useful. Because, in a way, you needed to wake up. You are being shown the way the whole situation looks to outsiders. And that helps you think harder about what you'll allow in life.

- H-702 Aquarius February 29 – Whatever you have been experiencing in terms of sex, pregnancy questions, dating fathers or other people's kids takes you nowhere. Just when you think you've changed the agenda, you haven't. It improves 50% in June, 200% from August. Much is yet to come.
- H-703 Pisces February 29 – You must be wondering if things will ever actually change with your family, house, share household or flat. You don't have too much longer to wait. In fact, what is on offer to you after mid-year (and particularly after summer) is so outstanding you'll make up for lost time.
- H-704 Capricorn February 29 – Work, university life or your non-profit role keeps you suspended. It's like time-travelling but without the fun of seeing people in ruffs. As time loops back, though, or glues you to one place – just remember. Once the cycle breaks the biggest and best will come.
- H-705 Sagittarius February 29 – Why do you keep inwardly groaning at the same situation, over and over again, with your past, present or potential lovers? Blame the Moon's Node. But your karma points are going up. Within months every stoic attempt is rewarded. Every noble deed paid back.
- H-706 Scorpio February 29 – You appear to have given up any expectation that money, rent, the mortgage or business will take a different turn for you. Your horoscope says, hold on. Things improve from June, and accelerate after August, when at last you can use some extraordinary opportunities.
- H-707 Libra February 29 – You have been at your most thoughtful, ingenious and creative when trying to sort out travel, publishing, education or people from foreign cultures. Nothing moves! This is certainly bringing out your finest qualities, though. And rewards will come, hugely, after summer.
- H-708 Virgo February 29 – Your career, university life or non-profit role is about as lively and surprising as a stuck CD. If you knew that it would all stop in August, though, after which your chances of promotion or a hot new position skyrocketed – well. Kind of makes it easier to smile and deal with it.
- H-709 Leo February 29 – The situation with your social life, friends or that particular group never alters. You've been trying to change the script for well over 12 months but it's like watching everything on rewind. Soon after your birthday, this stops. For now, shift your perspective on it. It helps!
- H-710 Cancer February 29 – What is secret or solitary keeps you stuck. No matter how often you have tried to sort this out or change it, nothing really shifts. It will, after August. Until then you can develop an Alain Botton-style philosophical attitude. It will qualify you for sainthood by 2013.
- H-711 Gemini February 29 – Within months you will be able to freely deal with image or appearance questions without constantly feeling you're stuck. The lack of movement in the profile/looks department of your horoscope is certainly training you to be a fabulous human being, though...
- H-712 Taurus February 29 – Round and round you go, with money, houses, flats, precious possessions or any business interests. The merry-go-round stops at the end of August. For now, you can completely alter your attitude to this repetitive situation, even if you can't change the stuck music.
- H-713 Aries February 29 – Why does this all feel so very familiar? Because you've been here before. Not just years ago, but lifetimes ago. There is a fairly complex piece of karma to sort out with someone on whom communication depends. Or around whom the question of communication revolves.
- H-714 Aquarius March 2 – If you buy a computer, phone (or connect to a new ISP) before April 16 there may be technical problems or mistakes. Read the fine print before you pay money. There may also be issues with the post. A new start with communication is coming from April 16, though. Joy!
- H-715 Pisces March 2 – You will have freedom from a money, house, business or apartment situation which ties you down, by the end of April. Between now and then, though, allow for a general slow-down and patches of chaos. Make sure you read any signed paperwork carefully before agreeing.
- H-716 Capricorn March 2 – You know that a change affecting the house, flat, family or share household is coming. Just make sure you allow for a muddled time before it takes full effect, and pay attention to the fine print on any paperwork. From the middle of April, though, the new start will be made.
- H-717 Sagittarius March 2 – Give yourself about six weeks until you know exactly where you stand with questions about pregnancy, the world of children or sex. This is a strange time when there will be lots of hold-ups or u-turns. A major change is in store at the end of April though. You'll be free.
- H-718 Scorpio March 2 – You know that a big change is coming with work, university or a volunteer role. But when? Allow for a delay, cancellation or reversal until the middle of next month, but then prepare to handle life at top speed, as a breakthrough will come on, or close to, April 22.
- H-719 Libra March 2 – Save yourself time and hassle by allowing the situation with your former, current or potential partner to play itself out until the middle of April. This also applies to any enemies. You will not know where you stand until April 16, but from there, you will have amazing freedom.
- H-720 Virgo March 2 – Your money, business, rent, mortgage, investment or possessions will not go according to plan until April 16, when life will speed up, and the time will be right for one of the biggest changes of the year. Until then take sensible precautions. And do not trust so-called promises.

- H-721 Leo March 2 – Your plans to travel, write, study, teach, publish or involve yourself closely with foreign people may not go according to plan. Should that stop you? Not if you allow for changes or delays before paying upfront, or signing your name. From April 16th, however, life will be thrilling.
- H-722 Cancer March 2 – If you have a job application or CV pending then allow for delays or changes before the middle of next month. With all work, university or volunteer issues, remember that life may not go smoothly for some time. However, the second half of April will bring you freedom.
- H-723 Gemini March 2 – Plans involving friends, or a group, will be affected by delays, cancellations or changes between now and the middle of April so read the policies on any bookings. If you are signing up to a club, team or other group, then make sure you read the fine print as well.
- H-724 Aries March 2 – You may want to go ahead with new ideas about your image, discussions about your appearance, or changes to your online profile. Allow for delays or reversals, though. It will not be until April 16 that everything can be finalised. If it costs money read the fine print.
- H-725 Aquarius March 3 – The money, house, flat, business or possessions seems to be holding you up, or complicating your life. This stops on April 4th and moves even more quickly from April 14th. Use this time to go over old papers or websites as you'll turn up some useful discoveries that way.
- H-726 Pisces March 3 – Your former, current or potential partner is creating an action-stations situation, but there is no action. Maybe an enemy or rival is doing the same. After April 14th you can roll up your sleeves and sort this out once and for all. For now, don't stoke any tension for you, him/her.
- H-727 Capricorn March 3 – It must seem as if you have to move (as in move, now!) on projects, plans, places, people and ideas. Yet what are you supposed to do when half the planets appear to be going backwards? The answer lies in ruminating, like a cow. A nice, calm, contemplative cow.
- H-728 Sagittarius March 3 – Everything will come together after April 4th, with a big spurt of progress from April 14th. At the moment, neither home nor work is coming together as it should. This is a bore on one level, but on another it gives you time to get a major decision for April absolutely right.
- H-729 Scorpio March 3 – If a friend or group in your world has generated heat, don't give it any oxygen unless you want a forest fire of emotion after April 14th. For the moment, nothing is happening, which is quite useful. It means you can go back in time to review things and process them.
- H-730 Libra March 3 – You'll sort out your lifestyle as a whole (from waking to sleeping, via work or university) once you're past April 4th but for the moment, just believe that it will happen. Something that has been covered up continues to nag. You will sort this quickly and firmly in weeks.
- H-731 Virgo March 3 – You have a lot of questions about your former, current or potential lover, and few answers. This also applies to your enemy, rival or opponent. The good news is, answers come after April 4th. For now, look back on old emails, letters or texts and use that to plan after April.
- H-732 Leo March 3 – You will sort out your money, house, flat or business after April 4th, with even faster progress from April 14th. At the moment it's all going backwards, or has been affected by post, computers or phones. What can you do? Review, rethink, rewind. Use that to plan after April.
- H-733 Cancer March 3 – You can get on with that burning communication issue after April 14th. At the moment nothing is really moving, no matter if it's your phone, computer or a particular role on a plan. Use this time to review exactly what's been going on and the best possible strategy ahead.
- H-734 Gemini March 3 – Any home improvements that are taking forever will speed up after April 14. That is also the date you will have final commitments from your flatmate or a family member, or may even move. At the moment everything is dragging. But it also gives you time to plot and plan.
- H-735 Taurus March 3 – You seem confused, and may be confusing others. Your friendship, social circle or group involvement is at the heart of it all. Go back over anything that was put in writing before February. And ask for clarification if you have to. Sometimes a simple question will say it all.
- H-736 Aries March 3 – Health, work, university or volunteer issues will move forward very quickly from April 14th but at the moment, you need to watch how you manage the situation. Because something should be happening (but isn't) you need to pace yourself. And find an outlet for your tension.
- H-737 Aquarius March 4 – By October, you will be better educated about travel, foreign cultures, distant regions, publishing, the internet and universities than you ever dreamed, two years ago. You are still learning the hard way but it will reward you. For now, ask yourself if your approach is pinging.
- H-738 Pisces March 4 – Within eight months the toughest money, house, business and apartment cycle of your life ends. At the moment, it's all too challenging for words, because you have zero experience in what is being thrown at you. Today, you remember an excellent lesson, and use it.
- H-739 Capricorn March 4 – The top of your horoscope rules your social status, career, university results or volunteer role. Your karma is heavy in this area right now, so you are seeing past life debts coming back. What you did before, must now be balanced out. Today, you'll make solid progress.

- H-740 Sagittarius March 4 – You’ve learned more about the art of friendship or group psychology, than you ever knew before. And yet it’s still not enough. Until the L plate comes off your pants, you will need to do some more knowledge-gathering. It’s wisdom you want, not a fast answer.
- H-741 Scorpio March 4 – Write it down. If you put your thoughts and feelings down on paper, even if this is classified information, or about your solitude, it helps. Seeing things in black and white puts it all in perspective. You’ve not been able to get it out and see this for what it is. Write, read, shred.
- H-742 Libra March 4 – You have never been through issues like this about your name, face or image in your lifetime. And you won’t have them again for around another 29 years. So use this time to get things absolutely right. You’re so much wiser than you were in 2010. What must you now do?
- H-743 Virgo March 4 – This money, business, rent and mortgage cycle only happens every few decades. No wonder it’s epic. So what can you do? First of all, congratulate yourself on having learned more in 12 months than you did in 12 years. And now, look at your February approach. Still working?
- H-744 Leo March 4 – There are still some hard, basic realities about computers, the internet, phones (and communication in general, which covers reading, listening, speaking and writing). It was never like this before! But this cycle ends in months. For now, is your last tactic still the best one?
- H-745 Cancer March 4 – You can’t avoid or change the reality of the house, family, flatmate or apartment situation. And you have known that for over 12 months. What you can do, is alter your response to it. Are you still pursuing a line of thought which doesn’t help? It’s a fair question, perhaps...
- H-746 Gemini March 4 – You will feel a lot better about your former, current or potential partners once you realise the endless stuckness of the situation ends in August. The endless future-gazing will stop in October. For now? Examine what you are doing to deal with this. Is it still working for you?
- H-747 Taurus March 4 – You have to live in the real world where your job, volunteer role, university life (or health) is concerned. How easy this is to cope with, depends on the way you’ve chosen to handle it. If you weren’t super-aware of this yet, you will be today. And then you can adjust things.
- H-748 Aries March 4 – You are learning as you go, with your love life or work partnership. And even with a conflict. It takes time, and it occasionally pulls you in two different directions, which is the case today. Will there be a happy ending? Absolutely. And this situation will not last beyond October.
- H-749 Aquarius March 5 – Check before you invest in a new computer, smart phone, tablet, dongle or ISP. It could easily be problematic until April. It looks as though you have some big idea, project or plan hovering. It’s exciting. But it will take weeks to move smoothly. Allow for that in the diary.
- H-750 Pisces March 5 – If you are signing something expensive or accepting a signature, read the tiny fine print as there may be a change or delay before April 22. From the final week of April, though, you will be gloriously free. A house, flat or financial deal which held you back will be over.
- H-751 Capricorn March 5 – One in three Capricorn women are up for a new relationship, with someone to help from today. In other cases your main question is about the house, share household, flat or family. Change is the answer! It will come more easily from April 22. For now, expect delays.
- H-752 Sagittarius March 5 – That whole sex/pregnancy/contraception/babies thing is just crying out for a radical change. Or is this about other people’s kids, related to you, or part of your career? The next few weeks could be complicated but just as May draws closer, you’ll have that change.
- H-753 Scorpio March 5 – There has to be a revolution at work, university or with your volunteer role. Freedom must win the day. But when and how will it happen? First of all, there is a period of complication, starting today. It’s fine, though. It gives you time to think. Then from April 22 it all kicks off.
- H-754 Libra March 5 – You will break free from the person who is against you – or you will find freedom through, or from, a love-life situation making you feel trapped. This is an astrological promise. Just remember life will take a zig-zag path until April 22. Until then, don’t necessarily trust ‘finalities.’
- H-755 Virgo March 5 – Deep breath. The financial, property or business change will happen, but not (properly) until April 22. Until then you are likely to hit delays or reversals, even if it all reads right now, or sounds real. Read the fine print very carefully if accepting or making a signature from today.
- H-756 Leo March 5 – Freedom must be yours, as a traveller, writer, teacher, student, publisher or woman of the world. Big ideas or distant places require a radical new angle. The time is all wrong, though. Just stick with the core concept as your chance will come again towards the end of April.
- H-757 Cancer March 5 – There has to be a new beginning in your career, university life or time as a volunteer. But when? Despite how it all feels, your discussion, news or emails today will send you on a complicated path. But if there is anything genuine there, it will move forward from April 22.
- H-758 Gemini March 5 – You’re saying (or writing down) something radical that would mean you can break free from a particular social, friendship or group situation. But it won’t stick, or could alter shape along the way. You will have a second chance when Mercury is on your side on April 22.

- H-759 Taurus March 5 – From today, a person who can help you relaunch your name, profile or look will operate as part of a double-act with you (or a dynamic duo if you're a Batman fan). You two are very different but you have the same goal. And by early June, the new you will be a reality.
- H-760 Aries March 5 – You think you've made a statement of your independence (or written it down) and it sets you free. But from March 12 this could be reversed or delayed for you. If you really feel it, and mean it, then you'll be ready to pick up the thread near April 22 when it's 'Take two' time.
- H-761 Aquarius March 6 – You long to plunge into something different where money, business or property is concerned, and this is it. Just remember this dreamlike alternative comes with rules (or it should!) A person who could make such a difference to the house or flat is firmly on your side now.
- H-762 Pisces March 6 – Your way with words or images could take you higher, further (faster!) The right person to move ahead with you is by your side today. It seems you're also entertaining fantastic possibilities about your own name, face, body or style. It's just what you need. But is it real?
- H-763 Capricorn March 6 – The more fully you engage with the world of children (from babies to teens) the more life gives back to you, with a strong show of trust today. It's also time to look at your computer or phone use. Sure it's an escape. But it's starting to look a little borderline chaotic.
- H-764 Sagittarius March 6 – The house, the flat, the family or the flatmate – it could all become quite flakey if you let it – but with any luck, you won't. A dreamy alternative can still be that, if you have rules! It looks as if your life at work or university could be epic by June. It moves forward today.
- H-765 Scorpio March 6 – These are seriously loved-up stars for one in three Scorpio women. For all people born October or November, though, it's an epic time of possibility for partnerships. The double-act could be professional too. The other person is so different to you, but you meet in the middle.
- H-766 Libra March 6 – If you build this, it could be so much bigger. And never mind the money, house, flat, business or possessions – it's about the trust and co-operation. This is now officially a balancing act! Your work or study routine is interesting too. Seems like it's no longer routine at all.
- H-767 Virgo March 6 – Keep your eyes on the prize with travel, publishing, education or people from foreign cultures. Someone has just come on board to take the journey with you. It looks like a former, current or potential lover is also offering a dreamlike alternative to reality. Sure, but control it!
- H-768 Leo March 6 – Well, this is new. Someone has a career, university or voluntary goal which neatly dovetails with your own ambition. This is now a double act, it's official. The other intriguing possibility is a financial, business or property escape route. But you must know where the limits are.
- H-769 Cancer March 6 – Two new developments show up in your horoscope today. One is the new closeness with a friend (or someone in a group) which helps you on the road to something bigger and better. Another is the fascination of a trip, course, book or website. The latter needs rules though.
- H-770 Gemini March 6 – Ever since February 3rd you've been shown a side of your career, or university life (or volunteer role) that has nothing to do with the real world. Not surprisingly, you find it just a teeny bit enchanting. However, without some kind of structure, it's unlikely to truly deliver.
- H-771 Taurus March 6 – If you want your friendship or group involvement to offer you the kind of refreshing escape you want, then it will need to be contained or controlled. Without some rules, or a basic understanding, it sends your life all over the place. Now is the moment to haul it back in.
- H-772 Aries March 6 – There is more money to be made, or saved (or perhaps cash in kind) by June. Someone else is now ready to play his or her part. If you have a lunchtime meeting, that may be the moment it's laid on the line. By Sunday, in any case, it's clear this is going to be a two-way street.
- H-773 Aquarius March 7 – Something needs to be done about the money, business, property or possessions. But what and when? Your horoscope says, the second half of April is ideal. While the emotion is floating, though, at least you can create some kind of thoughtful, measured plan for later.
- H-774 Pisces March 7 – You need to navigate very carefully and cleverly with this man or woman. Is this person your former, current or potential partner? Or are we talking about a known enemy, rival or opponent? Write it all down. Draw a flow chart, if it helps! Then move on this, from mid-April.
- H-775 Capricorn March 7 – Travel, foreign cultures, publishing or education is lit up in neon, in your horoscope. And it feels as if something definite should be happening – but everything is going backwards. This will alter dramatically in four weeks' time. For now, ask yourself how best to proceed.
- H-776 Sagittarius March 7 – Your career, life at university or non-profit role is up for debate. With both sides of yourself! You will see action from April 14th and after July 3rd there will no longer be an issue. For the moment, though, don't just spin your wheels. Use this time to take mental notes.
- H-777 Scorpio March 7 – A friend, or group, isn't going away any time soon. And the emotional heat is rising for you, he, she or they. What works best now, is the realisation that it may be another four weeks before you can take action properly. And to use this time to sketch out a way forward.

- H-778 Libra March 7 – What you have deliberately covered up from the world, and perhaps hidden (just a bit) from yourself, now demands a plan. You might think this is about taking action, rather than umming and aahing, but your horoscope advises you to wait. What is actually going to work?
- H-779 Virgo March 7 – Matters relating to your image, appearance or reputation have been crying out for an action plan. Nothing has been possible (nor will it be, for another four weeks). From there, you will accelerate. At the moment, use this time to jot some of your more brilliant solutions down.
- H-780 Leo March 7 – The money, house, flat, business or possessions are triggering deep neediness and basic instincts. In the background, there's the potential for problems too. There need not be any. You have to respect human nature in yourself or others. But a winning strategy is the key.
- H-781 Cancer March 7 – Let's face it, communication could be a great deal easier than it is right now. Your concern may be about the internet, or the real world, but things will become easier in about four weeks. For the moment, respond to the rising emotions with a sensible strategy. It will work.
- H-782 Gemini March 7 – Your horoscope is all about the house, flat, family or flatmates at the moment. Miraculously, it ceases to matter after July 3rd. What is now required, though, is a finely measured, well thought-out response to the situation. Things will move quickly after April 14th too.
- H-783 Taurus March 7 – Is this about dating, mating and relating? Or other people's children, in your world? Your horoscope says the temperature is rising but there is not much you can do about it. Let Thursday's Full Moon show you the emotion. Then create a logical plan, over four weeks.
- H-784 Aries March 7 – You can't take any proper action about work, university life or your non-profit role until after April 14. At the moment, it's all about spinning your wheels. What is required more than anything else is a written-down strategy. Feel the feelings, but create a savvy masterplan.
- H-785 Aquarius March 8 – It may be a bank or a business proposition, but since February 3 you have been shown a way out. Nothing has happened, as it should, because nothing has seemed entirely real. Today's Full Moon could alter that for you. This is like someone blowing a tuba in your face.
- H-786 Pisces March 8 – To see yourself as other people see you, is a huge advantage. It's the only way you're going to attain the required sense of detachment about your reputation or appearance. This will assist you, as you plunge into something which looks like such a divine alternative.
- H-787 Capricorn March 8 – Well, this is all relatively new. You have been shown two tempting possibilities linked to the world of words, ideas and communication. Both aren't exactly bogged down by hard facts or real details – but days like today, could change that. Trap this and contain it.
- H-788 Sagittarius March 8 – It's handy to see the fine details of the house, flat, family or share household situation picked out in sharp relief. So much better than a big, fuzzy, out-of-focus vision. You can use this Full Moon to help yourself get it right, and make it real. Otherwise it's just...fuzzy!
- H-789 Scorpio March 8 – Over the last four weeks you have been shown a glimmering vision of what might be, either in relationships or in the world of children (not your own). Now you can poke and prod the vision to see what it's actually made of, and how it's going to work with the real world.
- H-790 Libra March 8 – The Full Moon at around 9.39am falls in your house of secrets and solitude. So the time has come to face this and decide what to do. It's also the right moment to look at work, daily routine or university life. You've been shown a way to escape. But how will it actually happen?
- H-791 Virgo March 8 – The man or woman you would describe as your opposite number, your opposite (opposites can attract) or even your opposition (if loathing binds you together) is more crucial to your decision-making today. Nothing has been entirely real, lately. This is your chance to make it so.
- H-792 Leo March 8 – Your own finances, flat, house or business interest makes a solid plan necessary. You can kick it off successfully in about four weeks. When it comes to other people's cash, property or resources, a dreamy alternative is on offer. To make it real, put some firm boundaries in.
- H-793 Cancer March 8 – If you're ever going to lose yourself (happily) in the dreamiest of journeys, courses, books, websites or global relationships – you will have to adjust. Your situation is so new it may be hard to know where the parameters are. This morning's Full Moon will help you find them.
- H-794 Gemini March 8 – Your career, university role or volunteer position needs to be reviewed, clarified, controlled and most of all, micro-managed. The Full Moon shows you why. The family, share household, flat or house also requires a plan. You'll be in the clear with all this in about four weeks.
- H-795 Taurus March 8 – You need to wipe the dust off the window, so you can peer into the Big Brother house of your own life, and actually see it clearly. This is about your social life, friendships or group involvements. And it's been hard to make out since February. Time to see this properly at last?
- H-796 Aries March 8 – The Full Moon at around 9.39am this morning sheds light on the secret you just revealed (or the one you are still covering up). It all helps clear things up for you. Less easy is work, university life or volunteering. But remember, from April 14th you can sort it all out efficiently.

- H-797 Aquarius March 9 – You can't avoid the general, predictable outcome. Your fate, in terms of education, publishing, travel or people from other cultures is assured. It's the way you get there, that counts. You will now be able to count the emotional cost of what you've been doing. Useful.
- H-798 Pisces March 9 – Because a particular financial, business or property outcome is going to happen anyway, you might as well select the most comfortable way to get there. With the best will in the world, you might be doing things which aren't helpful. Now is the perfect time to enquire.
- H-799 Capricorn March 9 – This is the toughest career cycle in 29 years and it ends in October. Between now and Sunday you will have a chance to check up on yourself, and the method you have been using to cope. Are you in denial? Overplaying something? What about avoidance tactics? It helps.
- H-800 Sagittarius March 9 – The situation with your friend, or that particular group, ends within months. At the moment you are dealing with the basic emotional needs involved. After Sunday you will have passed another mini-milestone. And also asked yourself if your approach truly serves you.
- H-801 Scorpio March 9 – Between now and Sunday you may need more time and space, to focus on what you have been covering up. Or perhaps the issue is your solitude right now. Writing things down is a time-honoured way of getting it all in perspective. And you don't have to keep it.
- H-802 Libra March 9 – The Moon in Libra, your own sign, is making some issues about your image, reputation or appearance very clear. You'll come at this from an irrational, emotional point of view – which is different. This gives you insights you need. Because ultimately you must be in a comfort zone.
- H-803 Virgo March 9 – You've taken various steps to deal with a money, house, business or flat question. Now you are being shown the emotional consequences of those steps. Is your early 2012 plan still working for you? This is the right time to look in the mirror and ask that question.
- H-804 Leo March 9 – The written or spoken word (online or offline) has not been easy for you lately. This cycle ends in October, but for the moment, there are a few things you can do. Start by looking at any self-defeating attitudes or tactics. Are you getting in your own way? It's a good time to look.
- H-805 Cancer March 9 – For one in three Cancerians, your mum is an issue now. The solution is timeless. In all cases, no matter when your birthday falls, this is a good moment to question your approach to the house, flat, family or flatmates. What are these strong emotions telling you to focus on?
- H-806 Gemini March 9 – After October, you will no longer have to care so much about the impact you are having on the next generation. Will you be a parent or not? What about other peoples' kids? What if you want to avoid motherhood? Don't let the current Moon mood trigger a hasty decision.
- H-807 Taurus April 9 – Your job, course or volunteer role is up for a mini-review between now and Sunday. Something (or someone) you can do absolutely nothing about, looms large. The trick is altering your approach. You are free to question yourself about what you have been doing!
- H-808 Aries March 9 – If you are single and thinking about pursuing someone new, check that he/she is not just a way to parcel up any fears you might have. Otherwise you'll live with the consequences. A partnership which is full of 'tasks' doesn't get any easier. But you are becoming much wiser.
- H-809 Aquarius March 10 – There isn't an Aquarian woman alive who doesn't long to travel, to express herself on the internet, to learn more about the world, or to explore people whose backgrounds are so fascinatingly different. So why is it all so hard? Answer: look at how you're handling it!
- H-810 Pisces March 10 – If I told you this was the most bonkers financial cycle of your life, would you feel better? You should, because within six months you'll be out of it. For now, ask a person you trust, to give you their opinion of that particular coping method you've been trying. Could be useful.
- H-811 Capricorn March 10 – There are some pretty basic fears going round for Capricorns now. Losing a job. Not getting a job. Not knowing what career you should have. Flunking your course. Not doing the job perfectly. Aaargh! It helps to know it's just a cycle. A bigger deal is, your chosen tactics!
- H-812 Sagittarius March 10 – You are only human, and you wouldn't be a human bean (like a baked bean, but with a dress on) unless you weren't avoiding something. What you are avoiding involves a friend, a group or your social life. But is it a smart move or a bean-like one? Time to probe.
- H-813 Scorpio March 10 – So much truth is being revealed about your inner life, your secrets and your sensitive bits (don't go there) that the weekend is jam-packed, just inside your own head. Is there really any time or energy for life outside? Maybe. But don't miss this chance to be a DIY therapist.
- H-814 Libra March 10 – You will feel liberated and relaxed, on a level you never thought possible, once Saturn leaves Libra in October. You can be yourself, then and leave any concerns about your face, hair, body, reputation behind. Right now, a dream has an answer to help you. Ready?
- H-815 Virgo March 10 – There is a happy ending to this money, property or business story. It will all come out in the wash. At the moment, though, you simply have to go through it. Almost everything you learn will benefit you in the end, even if right now, it just feels like you're coping, day to day.

- H-816 Leo March 10 – Whatever you have been doing to try and stave off the inevitable, in terms of the plans or projects, may not be particularly wise. But you will only know at moments like this, when someone (or something) gives you a nudge. A dream, overnight, may have a message about it.
- H-817 Cancer March 10 – Naked, quivering fear is usually the reason women choose a particular way to deal with the family. Or the share household. Or, failing that, the rent, mortgage or renovations. This is the perfect time to repeat a question. Is your best possible tactic, still the very best one?
- H-818 Gemini March 10 – Every 29 years, the planet Saturn passes through your zone of pregnancy, children and teenagers. This same zone also relates (obviously) to sex. Before this planet finally leaves you, there is something to learn. You'll be shown part of this, if you are open to it, by Sunday.
- H-819 Taurus March 10 – This is your second day of soul-searching about work, university or volunteering. A dream overnight might wrap it up for you, so try to remember what the dream is telling you. In essence, it's time to get real about what you've been doing to try and stop what is unavoidable!
- H-820 Aries March 10 – Sometimes you just have to stare down the fear and ask it a few questions, as if it was a monkey sock puppet. That's exactly what is required with your love life now – or your work partnership. Get back to the core of who (or what) gave you the fear. Probably in 2011.
- H-821 Aquarius March 11 – Through friends, or the group, you are being shown a choice. Do you want prestige, comfort and belonging? Or freedom, spontaneity and wildness? The real priority now, though, should be your hopes for the house or flat. Something is looking so possible, today.
- H-822 Pisces March 11 – It's time to choose, when it comes to your career, your university life or your volunteer role. (Especially if you were born on the sixth day of your zodiac sign). Whenever your birthday falls, though, you must decide if you want to be your own woman, or heavily committed!
- H-823 Capricorn March 11 – Venus is telling you to draw closer to a person who can make such a difference to your life. Not just now, but in the future – because that is where you will leave the imprint of your life and personality on those born after you. And maybe even the generation after that.
- H-824 Sagittarius March 11 – Everything is in a state of flux with the house, family, flat or flatmate. There are no clear rules or boundaries any more, but today should help you (or others) decide where a line can be crossed. Or perhaps, not. Are there children around you? Don't let a male dominate.
- H-825 Scorpio March 11 – Soulmates and partners exist for different reasons. Some are here to iron out old karma with you. Some are here to be the new love of your life. Some are here to work with you (like a dream team). And then there are potential partners, who call you. Time to say yes.
- H-826 Libra March 11 – Your former, current or potential partner poses a question for you. Should you compete with other women for his approval? Or should you join forces with the sisterhood and dance rings around him? Of course, you can always walk away if you find the game too boring.
- H-827 Virgo March 11 – Your former, current or potential partner poses the question: "How far is too far?" If you have an enemy, this also applies. The biggest and best in journeys, ideas, plans, projects, courses or special people is just around the corner. You'll be brought closer to this today.
- H-828 Leo March 11 – Clinch that success connection, as this person will take you closer to a towering ambition by the middle of next week. Scan the internet for job ads today and tomorrow. On a more personal, heart and soul note – do you want to belong? Or do you prefer to be truly free?
- H-829 Cancer March 11 – Someone who only has the good of the group at heart, or your friendship as a priority, wants more closeness. Even one step in that direction is a giant leap by next Wednesday. This person is either a direct path to a bigger, better world – or your six-degree connection.
- H-830 Gemini March 11 – Sidestep a situation where one male has two or more females (including you) dancing around him. It may happen online or offline. Where your former, current or potential partner is concerned, look at the pros and cons of security. It's bound to involve a loss of freedom.
- H-831 Taurus March 11 – Well, this is new. Do you want comfort and security with the money, house, flat or business? Or do you prefer absolute freedom and independence? There's also another story emerging now. It's about your friend, or the group. Only you can decide how far, is too far.
- H-832 Aries March 11 – If you want to be richer, or just save money, the person who can help requires your input, support and willingness to treat this as a two-way street. You could be very happy with the results next Tuesday and Wednesday. And you can't put a price on this level of trust.
- H-833 Aquarius March 12 – You are now officially in the weird zone for computers, the internet, phones, fax machines and even the basics of communication. Allow around four weeks for things to wobble around a bit, before your grand-slam new plan occurs.
- H-834 Pisces March 12 – What you're thinking and feeling about money, business and property (now) is about two years ahead of other people. And yet you still have to spin your wheels. This won't last beyond mid-April. But it buys you time to ponder too.
- H-835 Capricorn March 12 – Mercury, the planet of communication, negotiation and information, appears to be moving backwards. So will that potentially amazing house, flat, family or flatmate change. In the meantime read the fine print or terms carefully.

- H-836 Sagittarius March 12 – Wow, a whole new world. At least for you – and others will just have to keep up. This will have a long-term impact on your relationships, or your connection to the world of children. But it's not quite ready yet. Give it a month.
- H-837 Scorpio March 12 – You are at liberty do so much more in terms of work or university – but not quite yet. The situation won't peak until the second half of April, when you realise that this is more than a one-off development. It could be life-changing.
- H-838 Libra March 12 – You won't know exactly where you stand with your former, current or potential partner until April 16th. Mercury, the planet of phones, computers, letters and 'promises' is going backwards. Hang on. But a revolution is coming.
- H-839 Virgo March 12 – Allow for one situation affecting your money, house, business, flat or possessions to swing backwards and forwards. It will be back to normal (or even be replaced with something better) from April 16th. For now, read the small print.
- H-840 Leo March 12 – From April 16th, the amazing new life will begin. That's when you'll really notice radical new changes affecting your plans to travel, move, study, write, teach or publish. Maybe you just want to know another culture better, too! For now – read the fine print. It's in a state of flux.
- H-841 Cancer March 12 – The new sense of freedom and possibility with your job, course or volunteer role is real. The plans are about to be held up, though, as human nature, computers or the post may get in the way. Fear not. In just over a month everything will roll. The new life will begin.
- H-842 Gemini March 12 – You will have a dramatically different kind of friendship or social life in just over a month. For now, it's all dress-rehearsals gone wrong, as the details won't stick, or there may be communication problems. If you're in a group of any kind, this cycle affects that too. Over soon!
- H-843 Taurus March 12 – The reason your life is on hold, from today (at least the part of it we don't see!) is simple. Without a delay imposed on you, there just wouldn't be time to absorb the full impact of what is happening. This is a major, internal shift. It's deep and it's private.
- H-844 Aries March 12 – Even if those new ideas about your look (or profile) stall for a while, hang onto what counts. It will be just over a month before you can really organise these changes, but from that point forward, it's time to make the kind of radical changes that weren't possible before.
- H-845 Aquarius March 13 – A home can be so much more than four walls and a roof at the moment. Your home life can be as meaningful as you want it to be, no matter if you are looking to save or make money, or just feel a sense of true belonging.
- H-846 Pisces March 13 – You've been asked to contribute to a very special project or idea not once, but twice. Nothing has really happened, because of lack of time or motivation, but now all the factors are lining up. Big leap. It's now or never, Pisces.
- H-847 Capricorn March 13 – In astrology, the Fifth House of your chart rules unexpected pregnancy, so if you don't want it, don't take risks! If you ever wanted to found a dynasty for the future, though, the right lover could be just around the corner.
- H-848 Sagittarius March 13 – Someone (or something) is about to come in and reorganise all the jigsaw pieces of your daily life, no matter if you work or study. And this could be epic. You are not the only person to benefit. But you can make it all happen.
- H-849 Scorpio March 13 – Your former, current or potential partner is giving you the key to the door marked 'Opportunity'. You could learn so much more, or travel so much further. This person is at a stage in his/her life when the same old thing won't suffice.
- H-850 Libra March 13 – For one in four Librans, now is the time to buy or sell property. In other cases, the focus is on money, possessions or cash in kind. You are being offered something special here and this epic chance could benefit you for years.
- H-851 Virgo March 13 – This is just the start of the travel, publishing or educational opportunities. But what a start – grab it and go. And sometimes, remember travel is all in the mind. It's the European, Asian or American background which counts, for some.
- H-852 Leo March 13 – You can now have more, do more and take more from your career or chosen field. The door is open for you. On a day-to-day work or university level, you can also expect the old set-up to shift. You, too, can find the right niche.
- H-853 Cancer March 13 – Your former, current or potential partner is the gateway to deep change, and it's about time you, he or she had the chance to make things work so differently. A friend or group will open up your world, too, in an amazing way.
- H-854 Gemini March 13 – Everyone can feel in control, now, thanks to the deep transformation affecting money, the house, the business or the flat (or possessions). Why should the power and the passion just belong to one person or organisation, hmm?
- H-855 Taurus March 13 – The real capital in your life is you. Your look, or name, is your new best resource. So do what is obvious! It is also time to embrace change. Your life as a publisher, traveller, writer, student, teacher or woman of the world will alter.
- H-856 Aries March 13 – You now have an opportunity to save more, spend less or make more. Either with cash, or cash in kind. Your chosen career or field also shows change, and not for the first time. It's all about trade-offs and a new kind of compromise.
- H-857 Aquarius March 14 – An unusually high number of Aquarians are about to gain access to money, and thus the bigger and better home they deserve. Not you? Dammit, wrong birth time! But still, you're holding special keys or about to get them.
- H-858 Pisces March 14 – You really like the other person involved with this project or idea. And it could do such big things for your future life as a writer...or professional non-stop talker. You two are so different. But just glue yourselves together and try.

- H-859 Capricorn March 14 – If you were pregnant at Christmas then this week seems like time to talk. Whatever is going on in your private world, you have to admire yourself for coming up with THE way to be remembered, gratefully, by tomorrow's adults.
- H-860 Sagittarius March 14 – The other person just really, really likes being your employee. Or your boss, or colleague. And if this is university we're talking about, it's another student or lecturer. You're about to get so much more from your job or course.
- H-861 Scorpio March 14 – Whatever you have with this all-important man or woman, it will get bigger. You two have been creating something together based on nothing but fervent optimism and absolute faith. And maybe Absolut vodka. But hey – it works.
- H-862 Libra March 14 – You were made for this kind of thing. It's like ice-skating as a pair, but with money. Or maybe you want the business advantage, or just that el cheapo studio flat. You could go it alone, but what's the point? Keep twirling on the ice.
- H-863 Virgo March 14 – Well, who wouldn't want to get away, or move, or take over the internet? Other big ideas now might include France (more than just a dodgy school trip memory) or perhaps a place at Oxford. Are any of these dreams mad? Only one.
- H-864 Leo March 14 – It's easy to get close to the man who clicks with your ambitions, or the woman who is in synch with your big ideas about status or success. It's not even about your lovely perfume. It's about you two knowing just how big this may be.
- H-865 Cancer March 14 – You are well-known for your family relationships, and especially your complex involvement with your mother (for better or worse). That's why a friendship feels more like a family thing, now. And it's going to take you further.
- H-866 Gemini March 14 – Whatever you do in secret, and whomever you do it with, don't share. It will only get better. If you've been longing to acquire a room of your own, like Ms. Virginia Woolf – or just more time/space for yourself – it's on offer.
- H-867 Taurus March 14 – The man who understands what you are trying to do (or the woman who is totally in synch with your hopes and wishes) now plays a big part. If you're going to be profiled out there, as you deserve to be, then use this well.
- H-868 Aries March 14 – At last Jupiter can deliver the solutions and opportunities (the cash, the house, the business, the flat) that he is famous for. Amazing astro-patterns which every astrologer will be writing about now, are unfolding. Say yes. Go for it.
- H-869 Aquarius March 15 – There is more money to be made by mid-2012 and looking sideways at the competition should encourage you to push this further. Even if you don't make instant progress, eventually your efforts now will pay off, so keep going.
- H-870 Pisces March 15 – You and your friend could make a huge difference if you take your biggest strengths and remember how powerful you are together. When it comes to love, though, less is more. Try to chillax over an issue which could flare up.
- H-871 Capricorn March 15 – The competition is doing well, and you want a slice of the action as a traveller, student, writer, publisher, woman of the world – or teacher. Even if you go backwards and forwards for a while, you'll get there by mid-year.
- H-872 Sagittarius March 15 – Monopoly is supposed to be a board game, not your life. But there are people (or big organisations) which have pushed the pieces around for too long. Your money, possessions, house, flat or business can now be rebalanced.
- H-873 Scorpio March 15 – A group project from the past could do with a gentle push. Or even a formidable piece of forward thrust. Just watch the heat with particular people involved. Keep this under control, though, and by mid 2012 this could be so useful.
- H-874 Libra March 15 – There's a law of nature that says any situation affecting your family, house, flat or household which has kept people in a deadlock, has to break. And there's a big reshuffle now, affecting anything from property to domestic life.
- H-875 Virgo March 15 – You have to find your own way through the emotional maze. What you've been going through makes you more honest with yourself about sex, future parenthood (yes? no?) or the wider world of children. The true answer is close.
- H-876 Leo March 15 – What a week for work, or university life. The new set-up will ensure that no one person or organisation dominates to the same extent. And that has to be healthier! Now, to money. Don't move too rapidly. This needs a strategy.
- H-877 Cancer March 15 – If you ran away from a potential lover because he or she was too powerful – oh dear. You can have another attempt now, but you'll have to pay respect. Settled? You two need to redefine whose turn it is to be in charge.
- H-878 Gemini – You can't do much about the house, the flat, the family or the flatmate (yet). But what you can do is plan a sensational June, as Jupiter moves into Gemini, your own sign, and the connections with Libra and Aquarius just get better.
- H-879 Taurus March 15 – The children in your world (or sex questions which won't disappear) seem to be creating tension. As in (strangled voice) tensssshion. It stops in about a month, when you sort things out at last. For now, just plan. And plot.
- H-880 Aries March 15 – The work or university situation is calling 'Action!' like the start of some Hollywood film, but all the action is held up until April 14, when you'll do more to move on this white-hot issue in weeks, than you have in the last few months.
- H-881 Aquarius March 16 – What you don't talk about, show or share seems to be the one area where you're not in control. Or, more accurately, you feel in control for a time, then lose it. Who or what is behind this? Strangely, it's you! Look deeper.
- H-882 Pisces March 16 – Your friend has an idea that could put you two in a powerful position – and give you more clout. So why are you failing to follow up? There are all sorts of issues here but just ask yourself what changed in your life since 2008.
- H-883 Capricorn March 16 – It may be your photograph, your face, your wardrobe or your weight. Maybe it's just how you feel you're viewed on Twitter. Eliminating whatever isn't necessary may take a bit of effort, but this is a brilliant time to do it.

- H-884 Sagittarius March 16 – The potential for you to have dazzling control over your money in 2012 is huge. So you have to ask yourself, why you get in your own way. The list of excuses is probably fairly drippy. Today is the perfect time to look at it.
- H-885 Scorpio March 16 – The internet looks like one of those things which (unless you fully control it, and take it on) seems to control you. That's what this communication cycle in your horoscope reveals today. What do you need to take back?
- H-886 Libra March 16 – Look back at the way you used to handle the family, share household or live-in partnership, in your world. Go back four or five years and ask yourself why things have altered. This is one of those rare weeks when an answer is clear.
- H-887 Virgo March 16 – Pluto is sending you three big messages this week. This is the last one. Basically, unless you become slightly more passionate and focussed, nothing will change. It's okay to be a control freak if it just means controlling your own life.
- H-888 Leo March 16 – If you got your daily routine and lifestyle under control you would have an awful lot of influence. But for some reason it keeps slipping out of your grasp. Why is that? You've had almost four years of this cycle now. Time for a Q and A?
- H-889 Cancer March 16 – What you see in yourself you also see in him (or her). This is about relationships, but for some Cancerian women it's also about enemies or rivals. Passion is precious. But it's not an excuse for the kind of behaviour that's surfaced.
- H-890 Gemini March 16 – If only you could get back to where you were, before 2008, with the money, house, flat or business...you're in a new cycle though and it still needs work. The trick is realising just how powerful you actually are...
- H-891 Taurus March 16 – For every step forward you take in terms of travel, education, publishing or foreign cultures – you take a step back. It's your own willpower that's the issue. It may be time to ask yourself why you're putting in all these obstacles.
- H-892 Aries March 16 – You seem to have let someone/something run away from you again, at least in terms of your job or course. The irony is, if you were to get this fully under control, you would be so powerful that plenty of other doors would open too.
- H-893 Aquarius March 18 – You are going to have to be way more proactive about business, money or related areas (like property) if you're going to squeeze everything you can, from the current situation. There is cash to be made or saved, if you work it.
- H-894 Pisces March 18 – If you're ever going to move, it will happen after June and certainly by December. This also applies to a family situation. If that's going to shift, it will take a few more weeks. But you will need to have faith. Bags of it!
- H-895 Capricorn March 18 – You have to be a realist about your chosen field, industry or business. Some things are bigger than you are, no matter how concerned you are about the future. The trick is keeping your sense of humour. Truly. And proportion!
- H-896 Sagittarius March 18 – You can't compete with a friend or acquaintance in the group, so you stopped trying. Was that wise? Maybe, as long as you are secretly learning from this person. And don't forget, he or she still has so much to generously give.
- H-897 Scorpio March 18 – If you banked on a partnership of any kind some months ago, you are now seeing how right you were. You picked a person who makes you look good. And if you're still hesitating? Quick! You only have until June 11 to say yes.
- H-898 Libra March 18 – Libran women never go into battle unless there's a big issue about fairness or justice at stake. And that's why you have been in this holding pattern now, for such a long time. In a month, it re-energises you as never before. Watch!
- H-899 Virgo March 18 – You took on someone (or something) last year and no doubt some people advised against it. But just look. The other side is in utter chaos. Still, these are slippery fish you are dealing with and you must learn when to dart away.
- H-900 Cancer March 18 – Once you immerse yourself in a team or group effort with all the emotional commitment you are famous for, you see why it's the gift that goes on giving. There are a couple of 'united we stand' highs in 2012. This is one of them.
- H-901 Leo March 18 – The internet never stops, does it. Just when you've got your head around (name new social media sensation here) something else happens. It's in your professional and financial interests to be on this like a tight suit, though. Just do it!
- H-902 Gemini March 18 – Keep an eye on the boundaries with your career projects and plans. You've moved with the times in allowing things to become more open and flowing. But unless someone, somewhere is in control, it may become a tad chaotic.
- H-903 Taurus March 18 – Things won't really take off until June and July for you, but you are quite right to put so much time and energy into yourself, even if it all feels a bit 'Me' at the moment. Any obstacles will melt away once the weather warms up.
- H-904 Aries March 18 – This is about building the future with cash, houses or flats. You've tapped into people (or companies) with bags of time or energy to give. This will move steadily, if you keep feeding it. All the way through to June 11. Then it stops!
- H-905 Aquarius March 19 – You're going to know so much more about publishing, the internet, travel, education, universities or world citizenship – by October. You probably thought you knew stuff before. But this is so challenging it's like a PhD. Use it!
- H-906 Pisces March 19 – It must seem like every time you place value on something, or try to price something – the world changes again. You just can't control this. But you can invent and create, even if it means chucking out Ye Olde Book of Money Rules.
- H-907 Capricorn March 19 – If you're going to get what you want in terms of money, houses, business options or flats – then you have to get real. You weren't real for a very long time – which is best forgotten now. But something is there. Work it?
- H-908 Sagittarius Monday March 19 – You went through a phase, shall we say, with the internet in 2010 and earlier. It's so over now, that it probably seems like ancient history. But if there is anything or anybody worth preserving, you'll know it now.

- H-909 Scorpio March 19 – This is a whole new world of possibility where your house, flat, family or share household is concerned. It's been there for you since February, but nothing has happened. You'll need a strictly practical plan. But you're so close.
- H-910 Libra March 19 – A blast from the past in your love life over the last few days has shown you just how hazy your life was in 2011 and earlier. Of course, you knew it at the time. But it's only now that you can set sail for a different kind of future.
- H-911 Virgo March 19 – Anything or anybody from a fantasy episode at work (or university) has had to last the distance. That rather unreal little period of a few weeks, late in 2011 or early 2012, has now gone. But if something's still here – great!
- H-912 Leo March 19 – Looks like that old enemy or rival of yours is even more slippery than you thought. Others have told you or shown you. This person is no longer a feature of your future, though, even he or she was an asp in the undergrowth before.
- H-913 Cancer March 19 – You must have been dreaming when you let yourself drift into that utterly unrealistic financial, business or property situation in 2010 or earlier. And now you can see the person or situation for what it was. Wow. It helps a new start.
- H-914 Gemini March 19 – You let yourself out of your comfort zone with a particular team or group in recent months and it helped you break a pattern. That's just the start. You're not feeling quite brave enough yet, but what you did will inspire more.
- H-915 Taurus March 19 – Someone was too kind in your career or course last year. And you were just a bit too inexperienced, or prone to impractical daydreaming. So now you're left with a flashback. It's useful, though. Lets you know it's a different life.
- H-916 Aries March 19 – Looking back over the last few days, you should be able to see a friend or group acquaintance in a new light. Were you dreaming? Not really. You knew the situation was wrong, you just chose to go with it. But not now. Oh no.
- H-917 Aquarius March 20 – You're more switched on with web advances than your colleagues or friends and that's certainly helped you so far. But what you haven't done is really rev your business or financial engine. There is a world of possibility out there.
- H-918 Pisces March 20 – With Neptune in Pisces, your own sign, you don't want to look like you're constantly escaping from the real world. Watch the way you are seeing, especially on a professional level. It's cool to seem creative, though. That's the option.
- H-919 Capricorn March 20 – You are going to lose your old security blanket if you go along with this big push for change. But how can you resist it? The world will move on with you, if you hold back. The property market for renting/owning is moving fast.
- H-920 Sagittarius March 20 – The past is looking pretty ancient now. And after a little bit of a delay in catching up with where other women were at, you can now see how it has to be. Is this a hard option for your personal or family life? Nope. It's liberating.
- H-921 Scorpio March 20 – You have no idea how much other people (or organisations) were restricting you, in terms of your job or student life. But you're slowly starting to see. Why? Because you're being offered a good alternative. You'll be independent.
- H-922 Libra March 20 – What happened with your partner a few days ago (or your ex or potential partner) has changed the game. And you needed that long 'Aaaah' moment in your life, to see just how much more scope there was for overdue changes.
- H-923 Virgo March 20 – You are going to have to be a total radical if you want to be free of debt or money worries (and who doesn't have them?) Don't ever think you can be too revolutionary. But the timing is not yet right. Four more weeks, tops.
- H-924 Leo March 20 – You'll operate independently as a student, writer, teacher, publisher or traveller within two months. Alternatively, you need to be free where a European, Asian or US contact is concerned. It's all coming. In a roundabout way.
- H-925 Cancer March 20 – You should have jumped on board with the big, radical new trend in your career or chosen field a few weeks ago. Someone wanted to meet you halfway. Whatever did (or did not) happen can be corrected. It will take effort.
- H-926 Gemini March 20 – Your friend is teaching you how to be free. The total lack of predictability in his or her behaviour is maddening and mysterious. But this person is your own personal Statue of Liberty. With movement. Take a tip or three.
- H-927 Taurus March 20 – Why is everyone around you being so damn radical? It's like you're surrounded by wannabe revolutionaries, and some of them are even staging a one-person revolution, all by themselves. Meet them halfway? Is it possible? Oh yes...
- H-928 Aries March 20 – Uranus, the planet of revolution, freedom and independence is in Aries. That's why you are channelling these very pure ideals for people who are fed up with being told what to think, say or do. But take it easy. You are not a planet!
- H-929 Aquarius March 21 – You haven't gone as far you might, with a matter related to travel, academia or publishing. Why did you slow down or stop? A woman or female-dominated organisation has an alternative point of view on the issue. It so helps!
- H-930 Pisces March 21 – You can't just keep pretending that business, tax or money reality isn't there. Or is this about the house or flat? In any case, someone who was born brilliant has some very good advice. She's considered a go-to person by her dad.
- H-931 Capricorn March 21 – A woman you might describe as the Queen of her profession or academic field has a lot to say. Or she wrote it down ages ago. This will help you crack that silly fear you have, which always gets in the way of your field of vision.
- H-932 Sagittarius March 20 – The past is looking pretty ancient now. And after a little bit of a delay in catching up with where other women were at, you can now see how it has to be. Is this a hard option for your personal or family life? Nope. It's liberating.
- H-933 Scorpio March 21 – You need to step right away from the Secret Thing and see it from a totally different angle. You will be able to do this today after a woman (or female influence) enters your world. This helps you realise what you missed before.

- H-934 Libra March 21 – Minerva, the asteroid of wisdom, is in Libra today. She will help you get over a really boring obstacle you have which affects the way you react to cameras, Twitter, Google profiles, your CV or mirrors. Truly. It's time to crack this.
- H-935 Virgo March 21 – There is no fast, flashy or easy solution to your worries about money, rent, mortgages or business. In some ways, it's the nature of the times you live in. But wait, what's this? A woman (or female organisation) has a clever option.
- H-936 Leo March 21 – You will get through any writers' block today after a clever woman suggests a way through. If you have issues about phones, computers, the internet, deafness, public speaking or written ability...well. Just say. An answer waits.
- H-937 Cancer March 21 – It's possible that the family will change course, or that a house or flat will not last the distance. Those are just two popular Cancerian fears of the moment. When it comes to home and clan, though (or property) a smart answer calls.
- H-938 Gemini March 21 – Maybe your fear is that your ex will become a stepdad or have a kid. Perhaps the issue is the loss of a pregnancy, or never being pregnant at all. Or unplanned parenthood! Or dating dads? Tick any box. But a solution is here.
- H-939 Taurus March 21 – You have a block about work or university life, which has kept you stuck forever. Ask yourself what looms in your imagination and then look at this situation or person, as it actually is. Today is the perfect time to ditch your myths.
- H-940 Aries March 21 – Get beyond the fear factor with your former, current or potential partner. The connection could be sex or work. This seems to be an old, stuck fear from 2011 or 2010 that has nothing to do with the reality. Try a different angle?
- H-941 Aquarius March 22 – You have a friend who does not want children or marriage, or does not have them. She has something to teach you about female freedom now – and the F word. Money is another question. It's held up, but shifts in three weeks.
- H-942 Pisces March 22 – From April 14th you, he or she will finally move forward. This is about partnership, but also (perhaps) about a feud. There is no point in trying to hurry things up as Mars, the action planet, is misbehaving. But from April life moves fast.
- H-943 Capricorn March 22 – You'll be in a brand new situation with your house, family, share household or flat in the second half of April but what you're seeing now are false starts and dress rehearsals. This is by no means the full or final story – yet.
- H-944 Sagittarius March 22 – You won't really see the career or university action that should be happening, for another three weeks. At the moment, the situation is in a state of suspended animation. When it moves, though, it's really going to shift.
- H-945 Scorpio March 22 – This is the silly season for work or university life (or volunteering) when people will be flakey, computers won't behave and even the post could be late. It's all ahead of the biggest change for months, but in late April, it will come.
- H-946 Libra March 22 – It's still not the right time for a final conclusion about that person who affects you so much. You will find one 'conclusion' cancels out another until April 16 or a so-called final decision isn't final. Read the fine print if signing.
- H-947 Virgo March 22 – Freedom and independence (and glorious space) are big concerns for you, a family member or flatmate. This may be about the way you relate to each other, or about the physical environment of the house, flat or town/village.
- H-948 Leo March 22 – It's all about the money, business, house or flat. And nothing is moving as it should. Within three weeks, though, you begin an epic sprint, full of determination and perspiration. By July it's over. Right now, though, it's inaction time.
- H-949 Cancer March 22 – How can everything come together, on a career or university matter, yet be so untogether at the same time? The answer lies in the stars, but after April 16th you will know where you stand at last, and a decision will be final.
- H-950 Gemini March 22 – Count three weeks and you'll finally have proper action with the house, flat, share household or family. The asteroid Diana is also giving you a message about your old, current or potential partner. True freedom means no compromise.
- H-951 Taurus March 22 – The friend or group in your life is challenging you to find out how far you, he, she or they can go. Experimenting is the only way. Sex is now an amber light area for one in four Taureans. The light turns green in three weeks.
- H-952 Aries March 22 – It's hard to know where you stand with a work or university issue, or what should be done, until April 14th. But from that point forward, you'll find everything moves rapidly, with everything finally sorted out no later than July 3rd.
- H-953 Aquarius March 23 – You can't really dive into the new money, property or business world until you get past this peculiar period of delays or changes. It stops in around a fortnight, but for now, keep back-ups and check all 'binding' agreements.
- H-954 Pisces March 23 – If you're going to use one particular name for a business card, blog, social media page and so on, make sure it sticks, as there could be a change or mistake within two weeks. This also applies to 'Me' decisions about hair, weight.
- H-955 Capricorn March 23 – Your usual communication HQ (anything from a home computer to a phone in your bag) will be affected by the famously flakey Mercury Retrograde cycle until April 4th. If you're buying new gear, check the terms and conditions.
- H-956 Sagittarius March 23 – If you are moving, reshuffling flatmates, making important family plans, renovating or decorating – navigate very carefully before April 4th. It may be your mother or the landlord but allow for changed minds or other glitches.
- H-957 Scorpio March 23 – The world of babies, children or teenagers is more important as spring approaches, but it's also more complicated and confusing. This also applies to contraception, pregnancy or Dad-dating. Double-check what is 'known' now.
- H-958 Libra March 23 – Wait until after April 4th to make up your mind about work, university or volunteering. This also applies if a health issue is stopping you from working. You need firm facts and final answers, and right now, it's rather hard to acquire.

- H-959 Virgo March 23 – You won't know where you stand with your former, current or potential partner until after April 4th and that applies to any enemies as well. It's a flakey time and words may not stick, or even arrive when they should. Stay flexible.
- H-960 Leo March 23 – Eventually, other people's money, business interests, houses or flats will provide you with an escape from the real world. But not just yet. First of all you have to allow for complications until April 4th. So if it costs, then read the T&C.
- H-961 Cancer March 23 – If it involves travel, university, schools or publishing (in particular) then allow for about a fortnight of reversals, computer issues or post problems. It's a great time to go back over things. Read the fine print on hotels, planes.
- H-962 Gemini March 23 – If paperwork that is significant for your career, volunteer role or university life has to be signed or accepted, read the fine print. Be wary of 'final' statements as well. Until April 4th the atmosphere is a little chaotic.
- H-963 Taurus March 23 – If you can wait a couple of weeks, the conversation you need to have about a friend or group can take place properly. At the moment communication is not what it could be. There may be technical or human reasons for this.
- H-964 March 23 – It won't be until April 4th that you can make proper sense of your secret. You're backtracking, in fact, and that's why it's a great time to review, but not such a good moment to start anything new. Especially if it happens to be classified.
- H-965 Aquarius March 24 – There's no way you can move on your ideas, projects, plans (or new gear) until Mercury is direct. And that is a few weeks away. Still, keep the sentiment. The kind of anything-goes new freedom you love is on offer, so soon.
- H-966 Pisces March 24 – The old world you knew, in terms of money, property or business is so over. It started vanishing a couple of years ago. It's only now that you're in a position to make your ideas real, though. And they probably need to be radical.
- H-967 Capricorn March 24 – Wherever you come from, in terms of your family or home town/country, can't stay the same forever. Even memories have to be reframed. And that's why you can see a change coming. There's something unstoppable about it.
- H-968 Sagittarius March 24 – You keep taking Neil Armstrong-sized steps onto a different planet, at least in terms of how babies, children or teenagers are going to fit into your future. And yes, some of this is about relationships. Today? Another little leap.
- H-969 Scorpio March 24 – Your lifestyle needs loads more life in it, and that's why you have a four week epic change cycle opening up, from today. It may be university, work (or just your diet and fitness) but you're being led slowly into a different routine.
- H-970 Libra March 24 – It's easy for anyone to look at you, him or her and see why there's a big craving for change and freedom. And it's really visible at the moment. Nothing will really come together until late April, though. But then you'll be so ready.
- H-971 Virgo March 25 – Karma revolves like a wheel, now. What you did out of kindness or unselfishness in terms of the house, flat, family or flatmates before, now reappears as a special chance. The only issue is, do you want to be free as a bird? Or not?
- H-972 Leo March 24 – Sometimes you're so far ahead of everyone they just don't get it. And sometimes life catches up with you, so that people become as excited now, as you were before. This is a false alarm. The real change comes later. But it's coming.
- H-973 Cancer March 25 – The past is calling to the future in terms of work, university life or your health. This is a blend. You take very similar ingredients from years ago and remix them if you wish. But only you can choose between freedom and security.
- H-974 Gemini March 24 – This isn't the final story. You'll have to wait about a month for that, but your social life, friendships and/or group involvements will be very different. You already have an idea of what might change. But even you will be surprised.
- H-975 Taurus March 24 – Not even your best friend knows what you're up to, but this classified part of your life is where the thrills are, not just now but for the next few years. What you started to experiment with, just to see, now looks like being real.
- H-976 Aries March 24 – You're missing the information you need to make a radical change to the way you are seen, or appear. The conversation, news, e-mail or letter is yet to happen as it should. Yet from April 22nd it's impossible to stop you.
- H-977 Aquarius March 26 – The world of pregnancy, babies, children or young people (one generation behind you) brings a sense of stuckness, as others are lodged in a groove. You'll change on the inside, as a result. And develop 'wow' personality traits.
- H-978 Pisces March 26 – You'd obviously like things to be radically different with a family member or flatmate/live-in partner. Or is it the house or flat? Developing your best-ever personality strengths to deal with it makes life that much sweeter from June.
- H-979 Capricorn March 26 – Work or university life will change shape from June, and be unrecognisable (compared to 2011 and early 2012) after summer. This should make it easier to deal with a person who is on endless rewind now, spinning his/her wheels.
- H-980 Sagittarius March 26 – Your past, present or potential partner is programmed by family and circumstance and you can't alter that quickly. This even applies to a rival or enemy. So you follow a circuit with them. It will break of its own accord, promise!
- H-981 Scorpio March 26 – People really are stuck in a groove of their own making, when it comes to the money, house, business, flat or possessions that binds you. And you can't force them to change. But your acquired knowledge helps a lot from June...
- H-982 Libra March 26 – You can try to shake the situation out (with travel, publishing, education or foreign people) as much as you like. Others will stick to their scripts, though. It's almost as if they're programmed. But you're learning an awful lot from it too.
- H-983 Virgo March 26 – You may have only known these career or university faces for a few months, or they may have been there for years. The epic sameness is just as potent, though! Things will change. As early as June. It's a cycle that must complete.

- H-984 Leo March 26 – It's karmic with your friend, or that group. In other words, you're being asked to go through the same old situation, over and over again, until you get that deep hit of knowledge and gut-level understanding that's required.
- H-985 Cancer March 26 – Solitude or secrecy are amber light areas of your lights. Every time you try to go faster, left or right you find yourself stuck. The longer you stay there, the more you learn. And it's wisdom that you need – according to your chart.
- H-986 Gemini March 26 – When it comes to yourself (as in 'Me, me, me') there are some dead ends you keep hitting, even if you are at your most inventive or energetic. And yet, within months, you will be free to handle this so differently. Try your birthday!
- H-987 Taurus March 26 – No matter how much you try to alter particular issues with money or the material world, you keep running up against people who never change their basic pattern of behaviour. It's not easy because it's karma. But it will shift.
- H-988 Aries March 26 – You seem to be going round in circles when it comes to communication (no matter if it's digital or face-to-face) and you must be rolling your eyes. This pattern will break, though. And in the meantime, at least you know the script.
- H-989 Aquarius March 27 – There's nothing like seeing a situation clearly, just as it is. And it affected your looks or reputation for a long time. New on the horizon – a way to banish a problem and stop it from happening again. But it's a crossroads decision.
- H-990 Pisces March 27 – Because you can't tell anybody about this, it necessarily has to be a private decision. But it would be anyway, because nobody can argue the point. You have to debate it with yourself. This is classified. Allow time and space.
- H-991 Capricorn March 27 – There's nothing like money, rent, mortgages, loans, business (or valuables) to bring out the two sides of an argument. You're now on the verge of a breakthrough. But you must also weigh up the most spiritual kinds of pros or cons.
- H-992 Sagittarius March 27 – Being heard or read is much more straightforward now the most confusing cycle of your life is over. But what's this? Could it be a way through, or out, of some lingering remnant of a problem? It is, but it's a moral choice too.
- H-993 Scorpio March 27 – Well, sure, this would fix everything with the house, relative, flat or flatmate. But is it right? This is one of those questions which nobody can answer for sure. But you also have a way to insure against future problems. Very handy.
- H-994 Libra March 27 – This is about contraception or dating a Dad. Or alternatively about a child or baby in your world, or children en masse. Someone (or something) would fix everything. But only you can judge it, and it has to be a personal decision.
- H-995 Virgo March 27 – There is no more confusion about work or university life. Not since February. You can see who is who, and what is what. Right now, though, there is a clear way to protect the future. And also a remedy for the present. Ah, choices!
- H-996 Leo March 27 – There is major movement with a former, current or potential partner. And maybe with a great enemy. Only you can decide what is 'good' even though there are many shades of grey. Talk about weighing a moral issue or two...
- H-997 Cancer March 27 – The issue with the money, house, flat or business (or possessions) is interesting. There's a way to protect yourself in future, which is great. And a way to fix things now, which is even better. But there's a moral or ethical question.
- H-998 Gemini March 27 – The two asteroids of prevention and cure, Panacea and Hygeia, are now hard at work in the zone of your horoscope which rules travel, foreign people, education and publishing. You're being shown one way out/through this...
- H-999 Taurus May 27 – Sow some money seeds for the future today and tomorrow. This will happen in very slow stages, but what you do now, accelerates in April, goes much further in June, and by Christmas is in the bag. You'll save cash or make it.
- H-1000 Aries March 27 – Two planets are going backwards but from April 14th, it's business as usual. If you're wondering why two people (or organisations) are delivering absolutely nothing on time (or just nothing at all) there's an astro-explanation for it!

Streszczenie

Niniejsza dysertacja stanowi krytyczną analizę dyskursu mitu piękna, który przejawia się w ideologii *Cosmopolitan*. Językowej analizie poddano niewielki wycinek wspomnianego dyskursu, realizowanego poprzez dzienne horoskopy magazynu *Cosmopolitan*, stanowiące materiał badaczy w rozprawie.

Celem pracy jest analiza dyskursu oraz mitu piękna rozumianego jako zbiór fałszywych przekonań dotyczących kobiecości, ról społecznych kobiety, jej tożsamości i seksualności. Podstawę badania stanowi założenie, że mit jest słowem, a więc zjawiskiem dyskursywnym i poprzez język kształtuje i wzmacnia społeczno-kulturowo-językowy obraz kobiety i kobiecości w perswazyjny sposób, by realizować oczekiwania i wymagania zanurzonej w patriarchalnej kulturze współczesnej rzeczywistości konsumpcyjnej.

Praca obejmująca część teoretyczną, badawczą oraz wnioski, podzielona została na osiem rozdziałów poprzedzonych *Wstępem*, który przedstawia cele i zakres rozprawy.

Rozdział 1 dotyczy analizy dyskursu oraz przedstawia horoskop jako gatunek stanowiący reprezentację dyskursu mitu piękna.

Rozdział 2 mówi o micie jako zjawisku dyskursywnym, definiuje pojęcie mitu oraz przybliża mechanizm jego funkcjonowania.

Rozdział 3 prezentuje językowo-kulturowy obraz współczesnej kobiety oraz relację kobieta-ciało-tożsamość w ujęciu feministycznym. Rozdział ten wyjaśnia również zjawisko mitu piękna we współczesnym społeczeństwie konsumpcyjnym.

Rozdział 4 zawiera charakterystykę badania, szczegółowo określa cele i metodologię analiz poczynionych w pracy, wyjaśnia ponadto motywy użycia horoskopów *Cosmopolitan* jako materiału badawczego.

Rozdział 5 prezentuje dyskursywny wymiar mitu piękna i obejmuje analizę jakościową oraz ilościową badanych tekstów. Omówiono tu aspekty dyskursu, takie jak społeczność dyskursu oraz kontekst. Przedstawiono także manifestacje języka kobiet oraz języka sukcesu w badanym korpusie.

Rozdział 6 skupia się na aksjologicznym wymiarze dyskursu mitu piękna i jest próbą wyjaśnienia mechanizmu tego zjawiska. Mit piękna jest tu omówiony w odniesieniu do wartości, stereotypów, ciała oraz tożsamości.

Rozdział 7 podsumowuje poczynione obserwacje i spostrzeżenia, proponując modelowy horoskop *Cosmopolitan*. Omówienie stworzonego prototypu jest jednocześnie wstępem do drugiej części tego rozdziału, w którym autorka prezentuje własną interpretację mechanizmu mitu piękna.

Rozdział 8 stanowi ostateczne podsumowanie całości dysertacji oraz zawiera wnioski, które wskazują na obecność mitu piękna w dyskursie reprezentowanym przez ideologię *Cosmopolitan*, a realizowanym poprzez teksty horoskopów i kontekst, w którym są one zanurzone. Dyskurs mitu piękna został tu poddany krytyce ze względu na jego krzywdzący wpływ na społeczno-kulturową konstrukcję tożsamości kobiety we współczesnej, patriarchalnej kulturze zdominowanej przez konsumpcjonizm, zorientowanej na finansową korzyść i utrzymanie określonej relacji władzy.

Praca zaopatrzona jest ponadto w *Bibliografię*, *Spis tabel*, *Spis rysunków* oraz *Załącznik*.

Summary

The present dissertation constitutes a critical analysis of the discourse of the beauty myth which manifests itself in the *Cosmopolitan* ideology. The linguistic analysis was conducted on a sample of the above-mentioned discourse, realised by daily horoscopes of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine. These *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes constitute a research material in the thesis.

The aim of the work is the study of discourse and the beauty myth understood as a compilation of false convictions concerning femininity, social roles of women, their identity and sexuality. The essential assumption in the research is that myth is a type of speech and, therefore, a discursive phenomenon, and that it persuasively shapes and reinforces the socio-cultural-linguistic image of women and femininity in order to fulfil the expectations and requirements of contemporary consumer reality embedded in patriarchal culture.

The work consisting of theoretical background, a research part and conclusions has been divided into eight chapters, preceded by *Introduction* presenting fundamental aims and the scope of the research.

Chapter 1 concerns discourse analysis and presents horoscope as a genre representing the discourse of the beauty myth.

Chapter 2 describes myth as a discourse phenomenon, attempts at defining the concept of myth and discusses the mechanism of its functioning.

Chapter 3 presents the linguistic-cultural picture of the contemporary woman and the woman-body-identity relation as approached from the feminist perspective. It also explains the beauty myth phenomenon in contemporary consumer society.

Chapter 4 includes the characteristics of the research, outlines aims and the methodology of the analyses conducted in the work, it also explains the reasons for applying *Cosmopolitan* horoscopes as a research sample.

Chapter 5 reveals the discursive dimension of the beauty myth. The analysis embraces a qualitative and quantitative study of the texts in question. Different aspects of discourse, such as discourse community and context have also been discussed here. Furthermore, the

chapter presents lexical, syntactic and compositional manifestations of the language of success in the corpus.

Chapter 6 focuses on the axiological dimension of the discourse of the beauty myth and is an attempt at explaining the mechanism of this phenomenon. To an extent, the chapter is simultaneously a critical consideration of the beauty myth, although the actual criticism of the discourse is included in the last chapter.

Chapter 7 is an attempt to create a prototypical *Cosmopolitan* horoscope. This specific summary of the research is simultaneously an introduction to the author's own interpretation of the mechanism of the beauty myth.

Chapter 8 constitutes the summary of the dissertation and includes conclusions which indicate the presence of the beauty myth in the discourse represented by *Cosmopolitan* ideology, and realised through horoscopolical texts and the context in which they are embedded. The discourse of the beauty myth is critically approached due to its detrimental influence on the socio-cultural construction of female identity in contemporary patriarchal culture dominated by consumerism, and targeted at financial benefits and the maintenance of particular power relations.

Lastly, the dissertation includes *Bibliography*, *Index of tables*, *Index of figures* and *Appendix*.